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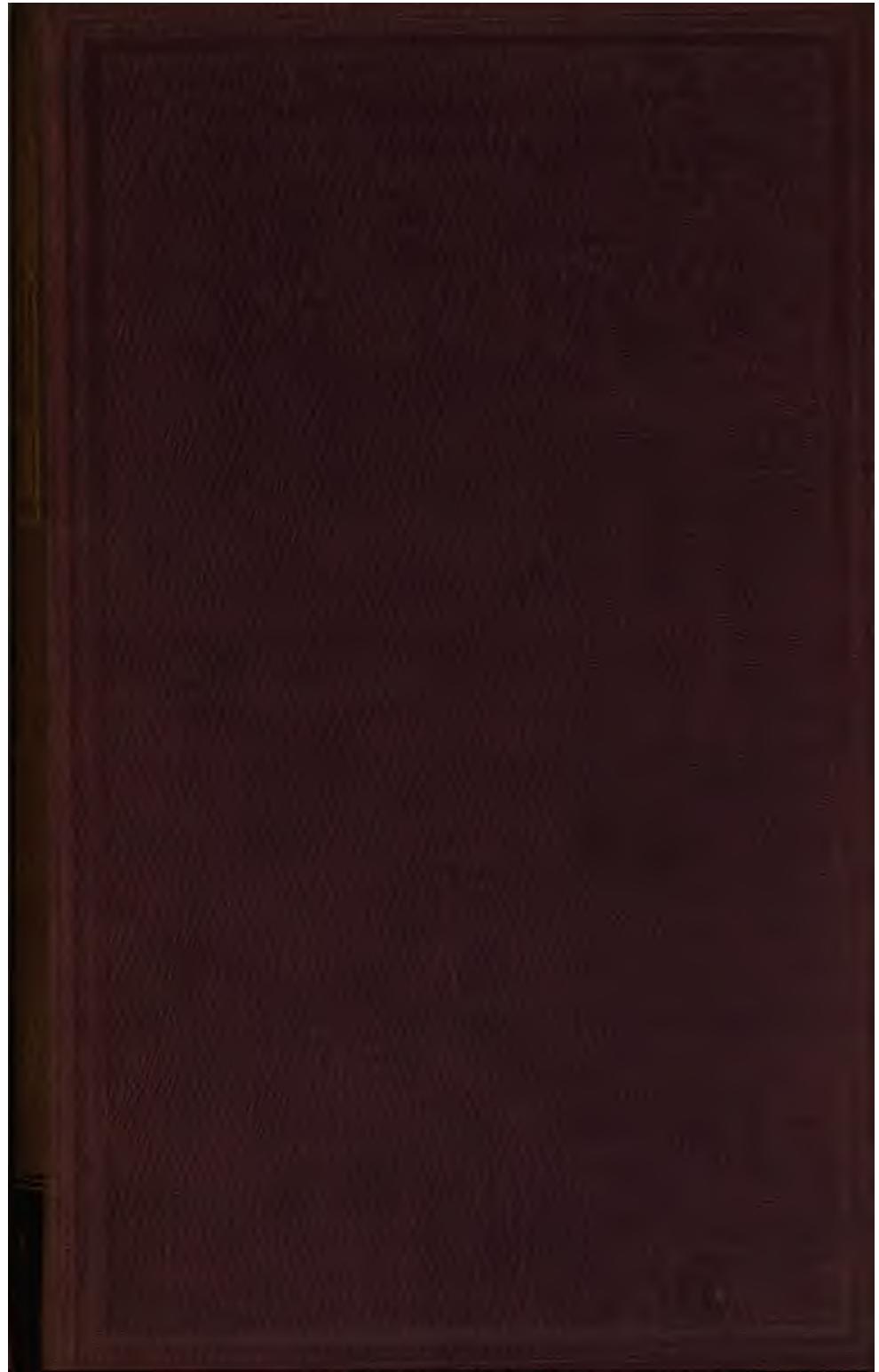
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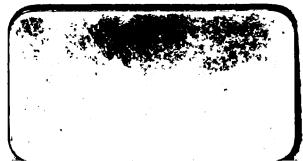
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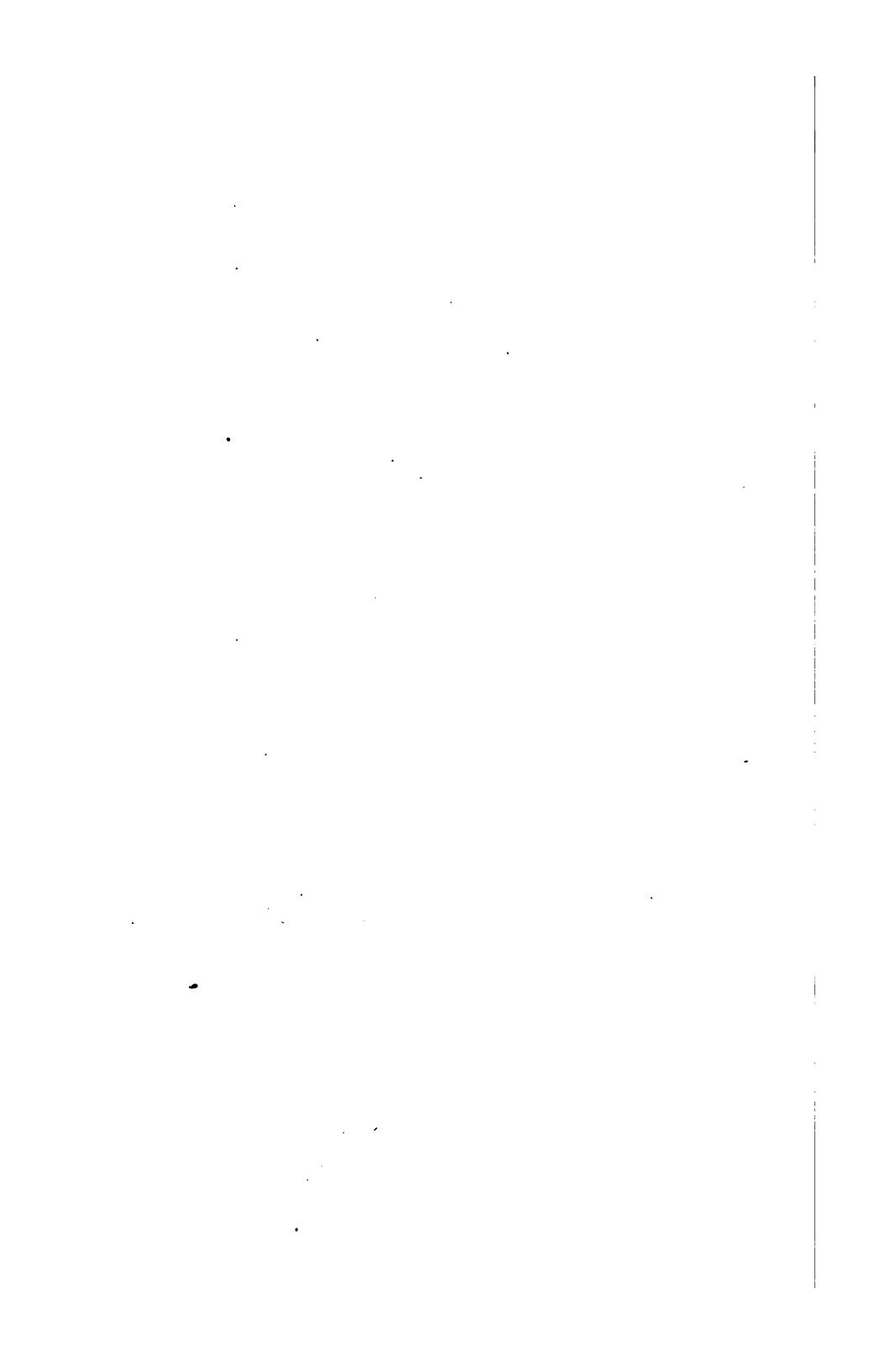




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VEILED HEARTS.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE WIFE’S TRIALS.”

“Nous sommes si accoutumés à nous déguiser aux autres, qu’enfin nous nous déguisons à nous-mêmes.”—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
18, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1856.

The Author reserves the right of translation.

249. x. 337.

PRINTED BY CHARLES BEVAN AND SON,
STREET'S BUILDINGS, CHAPEL STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE.

V E I L E D H E A R T S.

CHAPTER I.

‘It is a golden chain, let down from heaven,
Whose links are bright and even,
That falls like sleep on lovers, and combines
The soft and sweetest minds
In equal knots. This bears no brands, nor darts,
To murder different hearts—
But in a calm and God-like unity,
Preserves community.’

BEN JONSON.

“I KNOW what you are thinking of,” said Maggy, as she and Mrs. Cleveland sat together that same day; and, with her usual fearless candour, though it was evidently an

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effort, she continued—" You want to know about the Baron."

" In one sense, you are right ; but let me first say, that, though I feel much for his disappointment, which must be great, after having cherished such a hope, I am egotist enough to rejoice that you are not yet separated from us."

" Perhaps that, to some extent, influenced me ; and yet I do not know," she said, musingly—" for I suppose, if I had loved him, I should have gone with him joyfully."

" Then you really do not love him. How is that ?" enquired Mrs. Cleveland, quite forgetting her husband's injunction.

" I do not very well know. I suppose he is not the kind of person I should love."

" He is, surely, handsome ;" and not till she had said so, did Mrs. Cleveland remember that this was a recommendation, which could influence only a vulgar mind.

" Yes, perhaps, too much so," was the unconcerned reply ; " you are going to laugh at

me ; but there is a want of command in his appearance, which I cannot admire."

"I grant you, he is fair—but each feature is good ; and I have always fancied you preferred blue eyes and brown hair, rather than the romantic hero style of jet and raven, which turns the brains of most girls."

"Yes—but, then, the blue must be very dark ; and the brown locks must cover a head in which there is intellect of the highest order. Above all, the face must have that decision and resolution, in which, I fear, Baron Von Rüdiger is rather deficient."

Ah ! Maggy, Maggy, was this only a fancy portrait ? Had you no original faintly traced in your memory ?

Mrs. Cleveland was sadly transgressing commands, for she again spoke. "But he is very amiable."

"Very."

"And very affectionate—witness his loving reverence for his mother."

"Yes ; but here, dear aunt, I fear that I

am very naughty; if so, do not spare censure, but, perhaps—only perhaps—that excellent and justly-beloved mother saved me from losing my heart to the amiable son."

"How so? Maggy, you really *do* surprise me," said Mrs. Cleveland; "she is always represented as a most sensible, noble-minded woman."

"I know it, dearest," replied Maggy, with a deprecating look; "but her sense always appeared to me to have shown itself in a sort of cold, strict observance of routine duties—let me go on,"—she said eagerly, seeing that Mrs. Cleveland looked almost displeased—"Do not—pray, do not think this a character I cannot value! On the contrary, a duty-loving person commands my deepest respect, my warmest sympathy; but die Baronesse, as I have heard her described, never presented herself, to my mind, as one I could love: she commands reverence, but does not, with me, awaken affection."

"But her son is by no means deficient in

good sense—and see how she influences him."

"Dear aunt, now I know you will be angry with me—but I think she influences him more than, at his age, she ought; at least, much more than a wife would like. Whenever I *have* fancied the picture of domestic life, at that solemn old Schloss, I have seen the mother paramount—the wife only second in command; and I—oh! if ever I marry, I must be the first in every thing—the first, the best loved—the one who is first sought in joy and sorrow—the first who is asked to help—the first who is asked to sacrifice. Ah! I have lately thought a great deal about married life. It is true, I have seen very little, but in each case, as I have known it, it has looked different and imperfect."

"And, pray, where have you learned your experience?" asked Mrs. Cleveland, rather amused at Maggy's enthusiastic gravity; but this feeling was too powerfully excited in the young girl—much too real—to yield to a laugh, and she replied, earnestly—

"Aunt, at the Chase, it was without confidence—there was reserve on both sides—each saw the other through a mist: and at our friends' in town—I hope there is no impropriety in the remark,—but though nothing can exceed the love and kindness of Mr. Malcolm, for his sweet young wife, this would not satisfy me, if, on all-important or perplexing occasions, my husband had recourse to his sister for advice or aid, merely because he would not disturb my ease, or ruffle my happiness. Mrs. Malcolm, it is true, likes this; but I should not—for my understanding must be valued and respected, as well as my amiability. Friend, adviser, consoler—I must be all, or I should be miserable!"

Struck with her animation, no less than startled at this display of deep thought, Mrs. Cleveland had let her proceed till she stopped, evidently feeling most deeply all that she spoke; then, with a smile, and kissing the cheek, rendered so beautiful by the glow of heart-felt enthusiasm, she asked — "And

where does my Maggy expect to find all this? —where has she seen this happy union of rare requisites? Child! child! do not let visionary notions of impossible happiness make you refuse the happiness that is real, and which may be offered to you."

"And *you* ask this question?" said Maggy, almost reproachfully—"you, whose life has always presented me with the reality of what you call a vision. Yours—yours is my standard of happy domestic life—where there is no reserve, no concealment—where indulgence is the result of affection that delights in pleasing; not of compassion for your weakness or childishness—where your good sense is acknowledged; and your advice asked, and often followed."

"I am rebuked, dear girl, for letting the daily blessings which you have enumerated pass by as things of course, instead of viewing them as proofs of especial goodness, for which I can never be sufficiently thankful. Yes, you are right—unless there is this true love, which is

based on respect, and strengthened by mutual confidence, there is no married happiness—and so, my dear, you have doubtless done wisely, in deciding as you did this morning ”

But, though Mrs. Cleveland was quite satisfied with Maggy's conduct, and the result ; she repeatedly called to mind the unwonted discrimination that she had displayed, while analyzing her young lover's character and position. “ She does not love him, that is evident,” thought she ; “ no girl in love would thus criticise form and feature—sooner would she disparage his character than his beauty. Was there any concealed standard by which she had judged him ?”—and she then remembered, with something like dismay, that lately the Honourable William Everingham, Lord Bannersfield's son, had frequently been at the Parsonage, ostensibly about church business—and that he had remained to lunch with them : and, applauding the acuteness that had made this fancied discovery, and thinking she had gained a clue to what puzzled her, she over-

looked the fact, that he was turned of thirty, was neither good looking, nor particularly clever ; and, though a most worthy man, had no one qualification for winning the heart of a girl like Maggy.

However, Mrs. Cleveland determined to follow up the idea ; therefore, when they were assembled in the evening, and Maggy had twice sung a favourite verse from ‘ John Anderson :’—

‘ John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither ;
And mony a cautie day, John,
We’ve had wi’ ane anither.
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand-in-hand we’ll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo.’

Apropos to one of the gentleman’s cards—which she had purposely put into her work-box—Mrs. Cleveland, said, glancing furtively at Maggy, as she addressed her husband—

“ Mr. Everingham’s card reminds me to ask, if you have heard the report that he

is engaged to his cousin, Lady Emilia ? I know that she is now constantly at the Castle."

"It is very likely to be true," replied Mr. Cleveland ; "and, if so, Lord Bannersfield will doubtless rejoice. Report says that his honourable son took Miss Rochedale's rejection so much to heart, that he has led a very retired life since that disappointment. This, I suppose, is the cause of the coolness which has, for some years, existed between the families. For me, I disapprove of these cousin matches ; and, therefore, withhold my consent," he added, laughing. "But this will be a marriage between money and land—for the Bannersfields are the last to countenance a disparity of fortune or rank."

"He and Lady Emilia will be rather an ill-matched pair, so far as I can judge," remarked Maggy. "She is too young and lively; too affable and friendly, for one so proud and repellent as Mr. Everingham ; and, though it is paying my cousin, Edith, no compliment, she would have been better suited to keep up

the stately ceremony of the family ; besides being nearer his own age."

Baffled again, Mrs. Cleveland ! for nothing could be more unmoved, in appearance, than Maggy's manner ; even the hint, that the noble old family would expect fortune, as well as birth, in their son's bride, produced no change on her smiling face ; so she wisely resolved to leave off tormenting herself with conjecture, and thought that, after all, there was nothing so very extraordinary in the acuteness and accuracy of her favourite's observations and conclusions. Did she not, in every thing, evince remarkable good sense ? Surely she might dismiss the Baron, and yet not love another ?

But there was still an ordeal, which must be gone through, and a painful trial it truly was, when the dear old friend, Von Rüdiger, a few days after *the* morning, came to announce the departure of his nephew for Scotland, and his own intention of following him in the course of a week.

His delicacy, no less than his pride, forbade all reference to the subject, which made his heart feel very sad ; though he looked disappointed, and was greatly out of spirits ; still, he was so kind, so gentle, took his usual interest in the scraps of local news, which Mrs. Cleveland rummaged out, in order to hide the embarrassment which all felt ; and tried so hard to set Maggy at ease—for she was really unhappy to see him so depressed—that, when it came to the farewell, she gave way, and, throwing her arms round his neck, sobbed out—“Oh, forgive me—forgive me !”

“ Forgive thee, darling ! ” he replied, affectionately pressing her to his heart. “ What is there to forgive ? Love does not come at a wish, or I know thou wouldest have loved him for my sake. Neither does it depart at our command. Therefore, time and absence must be tried. Farewell, my child !—farewell, dear friends !—all will be quiet and submissive when we next meet—and memory must render one of us contented with your friendship.”

But it was hardly to be expected, that the young Baron would relinquish a hope which had been so inexpressibly delightful to him, without making another effort to have it realized. Scarcely had he overcome the agony of knowing that his suit had been rejected, than he was ready again to undergo this sharp ordeal—again to plead, and, perhaps, plead in vain ; and he now bitterly reproached himself for having been so easily repulsed. Ah ! why, when love was so eloquently speaking in his heart, had it found no adequate expression from his lips ? why, when everything depended on success, had he yielded at the first rejection ?

And yet there was a sentiment of pride which forbade the chances of a second disappointment—and yet there was a strong passionate feeling of sincere love, which was ready to risk it—pride and love ; but where the latter is real, it ever prevails.

He, therefore, took the opportunity of bidding farewell to Mrs. Cleveland by letter ; and

so clearly made a renewal of his offer—though it was done with a delicacy that much affected her—that she long pondered over the matter, and debated whether she should show the letter to Maggy or not.

“Show it her, by all means,” was Mr. Cleveland’s advice—“let us have no concealments—they are always dangerous;” and though, when Maggy returned the letter, it was with a heightened colour and tears in her eyes, she made no remark on the contents.

Therefore, Mrs. Cleveland was satisfied that all was right.

And thus ended Maggy’s first love affair ; for, when Herr Von Rüdiger returned, he was alone. Adelbert was in Germany, whither, in a few months’ time, his uncle was to follow him.

“I did not tell you of Mrs. Wilson’s characteristic remark, when I spoke to her, the evening before the Baron’s last visit here,” said Mrs. Cleveland, to Maggy ; “of course I fancied her sorrowing for your loss, like

myself, if you left us ; but she quietly replied, that the sympathy was wasted on her, for, go wherever you went, there she should go also—so like her, is it not?"

" Dear, dear mother !—quite one of her speeches. What a happy creature I am, to have such friends ; but, of course, this—this visit will not be named to any person."

" Certainly not, my love," replied her friend ; " yours is the feeling which every woman, possessed of real delicacy, and herself capable of experiencing a true and noble affection, must ever entertain."

" Thank you," said Maggy ; and see—" here is another letter from Miss Malcolm. Read it. You will find that the enquiries she had made about my unknown parents, have produced but little information. Ah ! how often do I look at the beautiful face of my mother, and wonder what my father was like. How grateful I should be to any one who could give me the most trifling account of him. This Mrs. Rochedale Bevington, who is, unfortunately,

now at Boulogne, is so very chary of writing. She says my father was an only child ; but she has a notion that he had an uncle and aunt. Oh ! if they should be alive !”

“ Not at all probable—or why did they neglect you ?”

“ True,” replied Maggy ; and she went to study her mother’s picture, and fancy what her father must have been, in character, as well as in appearance.

CHAPTER II.

‘Those wounds heal ill, that men do give themselves.’

SHAKSPEARE.

‘————— Yet here,
A not to be corrupted judge, my conscience,
Would not alone condemn me, but inflict
Such lingering tortures on me as the hangman,
Though witty in his malice, could not equal.’

MASSINGER.

IT was about ten days after their marriage. Edith and her husband were seated in a splendidly-furnished room, which overlooked the Rhine at Cologne. She was reading a few letters just received, and he busy glancing at the English newspapers.

Suddenly, an exclamation, or, rather, an execration from him, broke the silence; and, hastily looking up, she saw a cloud on his brow, such as she had never before observed, in one whose remarkably sweet temper was seldom ruffled.

"What is the matter?" she enquired; "I hope nothing unpleasant!"

"Yes, very unpleasant," he almost angrily replied; but, recalled by her look of astonishment, he faintly smiled, and said—"It is nothing—nothing that justifies my wrath—only one of those abominable blunders which the present Ministry have made so familiar to us."

And he immediately began to speak of their plans for the day, and the progress of their tour, and then left the room.

Had his wife noticed the particular part of the paper which had provoked this unseemly ebullition, she would have been puzzled to find anything that, in the remotest way, referred to ministerial measures; but she would have

read, heading a list of marriages, an announcement of their own.

Could that have roused Gerald's vehement indignation?—could that make him feel as if he longed for some one on whom to vent his rage? Yes, it did; and, silently bestowing a malediction on the officiousness which had led to its insertion—even while planning with his wife a tour which would, probably, require two months for its comfortable performance—he was sighing to be alone—to be free—and at liberty to pursue his own course, with fiery haste, in an opposite direction.

Already he felt that he moved in fetters; already he panted to exchange the ease, the luxury—even the immunity from creditors, which his present position gave him—for the power of hurrying to Paris, and having one look—only one look—at her whom he never forgot.

“At last, I perceive they have attended to your orders, and seen fit to pay us the compliment of a public notice,” remarked Lady

Blaymore, as Gerald entered the room ; and, with a smile, that was really becoming, she pointed to their name.

“ It is a blunder—a confounded blunder ! ” he began.

But, quite misunderstanding him, she said—

“ It cannot matter ; even had it never appeared, we — ” But, at this moment, Lord Blaymore’s Irish servant, Connell, presented himself, with a face of deep distress, and an appearance of great hesitation.

“ What now, Connell ? ” enquired his master. “ I hope you have not lost any more money, or had another quarrel with the courier ? ”

“ Nothing of the kind, my lord ; ” and he proceeded to inform them that he had received a letter, that morning, which told him of the sudden and dangerous illness of his mother.

“ This is unfortunate,” said Edith. “ Of course, you wish to be with her—what can be done ? Can we contrive to manage without him ? ” turning to Gerald, who had not yet spoken.

"I must," he replied. "So, my good fellow, do not distress yourself on that account, but make your arrangements for a speedy departure."

"And do not slacken speed for want of funds," said Edith ; and, opening her purse, she took out a note, and placed it before Connell, as her offering to his sick mother.

"I humbly thank your ladyship," said Connell ; but she did not then remark that the note remained untouched.

Gerald coloured violently—and threw up the window, as if oppressed with the heat ; and directly the man left the room, he followed—to consult the landlord, as he said, about some one to supply his servant's place.

Connell departed, his thoughts so full of trouble, that Lady Blaymore, when she collected her letters, found the money, she had given him, still on the table.

Then, she did not know that Connell's mother had been dead many years ago ? Certainly not—nor had she any idea that Gerald's

attachment to his foster-mother had been so great as it evidently was. His anxiety to have letters to meet him, at the post-office of the various places they visited, directly they arrived, was extreme—for he would not even entrust the errand to any other person; and Edith silently sorrowed at his sorrow—for she found, by experience, that alluding to the subject irritated him; and she had learned to know by look, voice, and step, when his enquiry for letters had been useless.

She had never thought he could take an event of this kind so to heart; for this must be the cause of his restlessness—his carelessness about places and things, of which he had once spoken with interest; and, after his recovery from an illness at Milan, this, also, she conjectured, was the cause of his proposing that their tour should be shortened.

To this, Edith was by no means averse—she herself had began to tire of their perpetual motion—this travelling from place to place—this never-ending sight-seeing—these

visits duly and dutifully paid to churches, which began to lose their identity among the crowd—these wanderings through galleries, where there was much celebrated trash venerated and prized, only for its antiquity ; and where the master-pieces of art were often passed over for want of time to examine their matchless beauties at leisure.

She also longed to find herself installed in their own splendid town house—to take her place in that world of rank and fashion to which she had been, hitherto, a comparative stranger—to make her appearance as Lady Blaymore—or, what to her was a still more valued title, as Gerald's wife !

“ I think,” she said, one morning, as they returned from a drive in the neighbourhood of Geneva—“ I think, dear Gerald, I should like to change our return route.”

“ Just as you please,” he answered, still standing on the balcony, and gazing alternately at the golden lake and the silvery Mont Blanc—the latter, on this glorious day,

seen in all its wondrous majesty, and towering far above the Savoy range of mountains. “Ostend is certainly detestable enough to make every one avoid it—but it is a shorter way—and the Antwerp route we already know.”

“I was not thinking of travelling again over the same ground—I have never seen Paris—and, on looking at the map, it strikes me, as being quite as near as through the Belgian state; therefore, we will return that way.”

“By Paris!” he repeated, with a start; “what do you want in Paris?”

“What a question! I want what most ladies do, who have already more finery and playthings than they know what to do with; perhaps I mean to add to my store and to our packages. Rosalie and Carl can hardly grumble more, over a few additional *cartons* and cases, than they do now—so, shall we go?”

“Very well,” he quietly said, “as you will;” but, before the day was over, he

returned with news, from the Café, that visitors were quitting Paris in all haste—one of those popular commotions, in which the French occasionally indulge, being daily expected to break out.

“I shall not mind on my own account,” he carelessly remarked; “indeed, there is something exciting in such scenes; but I decidedly object to your being there, and incurring any danger or annoyance.”

“Not for the world would I go, with this as the final scene,” she said, taking the alarm for him, just as he expected; “you fear for me, and I may be allowed to object to your being where, you own, the excitement is infectious.”

And now they are in England, and Edith has begun to understand the position to which her rank, family, and large fortune, entitle her; and her heart bounds with joy, when, at party after party, she and her agreeable husband are the chief objects of attraction. How superior, in her estimation, is he to all

others ! how fascinating are his manners, his smile ! how ready his wit ! how irresistibly charming his gaiety !

His gaiety ! alas, how is the word misapplied !

'Whom call we gay ? that honour has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name :
The *innocent* are gay.'

At length, when Edith was fairly launched on the full tide of engagements ; the same restlessness, that Gerald had felt abroad, returned. He had received vexatious news from Ireland, where Connell still remained, though his mother was dead ; and, from him, Lord Blaymore had been informed of various circumstances, connected with his prospects, which proved, that he himself should be on the spot.

"I do not ask you to accompany me," he said, when announcing his intention to Lady Blaymore—"for, in truth, I should prefer the fine old place to be a little more habitable, and like its former self, before I take you

there ; and I leave you so surrounded by friends and amusements, that I shall scarcely be missed."

"Not so," she very kindly replied—"nothing goes well when you are away ; and if my presence will at all help to diminish the discomforts of your deserted halls, I shall cheerfully accompany you—my pleasure in these gaieties is gone, when you do not share it."

For a moment he looked steadfastly at her, and an expression of mingled tenderness and pity came into his fine face—an expression which Edith saw, and remembered with a joy that was unutterable.

"No !" he said, perceiving that she waited for his decision—"this cannot be—I shall go alone."

This was the first time they had parted since their marriage ; and not till he was gone did Edith become aware how entirely—how exclusively—her happiness depended on him. She felt that, loved as he had been for many,

many years, he was now worshipped—his absence made a blank which nothing could fill—with him went all that seemed best worth living for. How she missed his solicitude for her comfort—his courteous attentions—how she now valued that unruffled temper, which, when her less sunny nature had been discontented and peevish, had charmed away the clouds. She thought of his ready obligingness, as contrasted with her pride and reserve—for all these amiable qualities had made their due impression on her mind—and again and again did Edith ask—“where, then, was my mistake, when I chose Gerald before all others?”

Was her alienated mother, then forgotten?—was there no pang, when, out of deference to the opinion of society, they exchanged formal visits?—was there no regret that the loving intercourse, which should prevail between parent and child, was exchanged for the cold courtesy of well-bred acquaintance? Had she not missed her mother’s blessing,

when she took that step so all-important in a woman's life? Above all, did memory never bring before her the last writing of her dead father? — writing almost as fearful as the words of old traced on the wall! — the words that thundered out his disapproval of her marriage, even from the grave!

Yes, there were times when, amid all her happiness, the blessing she had forfeited was pined for—when the prohibition she had disregarded, was remembered with a shudder.

But these feelings, which, during Gerald's absence, had pertinaciously made themselves prominent, at his presence, again shrank away —though, amid all her joy at his return, Edith was shocked to see how very ill he looked—how languid—how depressed; but, as he ascribed this to fatigue and worry, and soon entered, with even more than his usual high spirits, into every amusement, she ceased to feel disquieted, and again was carried away by pleasure and gaiety.

But the birds of fashion are winging their

flight into the country ; and, attended, or followed, by a select party of friends, Lord and Lady Blaymore arrived at the Chase.

How fully were the thoughts of both occupied during the last stage ; and who can wonder that it was so ? Edith was thinking of her dead father—of her self-exiled mother —exiled through her obstinate disobedience. And Gerald !—he almost groaned, as he thought of the betrayed—the ruined—the lost——yes, the lost !

CHAPTER III.

‘————— It was a mask,
Half painted as an angel, half a devil ;
A Dead Sea apple, full of rottenness.
It looked like virtue in her robes of white.
Watch well—it wears the inky black of vice.’

HEYWOOD.

WHEN Lord Blaymore so dauntlessly made his appearance in town, the very spring after poor Minnie had fled with him, it was for the express purpose of removing any suspicion his absence might have caused—for, though he had often spent this season at Paris, such had not lately been the case—the arrival of the

Rochedales having been an inducement sufficient to attract him over.

His intention had originally been to show himself, and then vanish ; as he was anxious to remove Minnie from the danger of discovery, and to take her abroad ; but his departure was even more prompt than he intended, owing to Lady Sutterby's remark that, at her house, the very next evening, he would meet Miss Malcolm.

Of all whom he knew, there was no one of whose penetration he stood more in dread than of hers. He could hardly satisfy himself that she had not, in some way, and, to a great extent, guessed his secret, and suspected his designs ; and conscience, always a coward when there are evil deeds to be concealed, made him dread an interview with one so observant and so fearless.

Besides, these London engagements, for which he did not care—these amusements, which were wearisome to him—kept him from one who was still so dear, and whose

look of love was still beheld with unabated delight. Ah! how glad she was when he said that they would leave their town lodgings, in which the fear of being recognised kept her quite a prisoner; and hasten to France; where Minnie *fancied* she was really happy, when a pretty, but small house, a few leagues from Paris was engaged, and she and Gerald became its occupants.

He, who always shut his eyes when clouds hovered in his azure sky, declared that he never had been so delighted in his life; and, perhaps, he was right. His neglected childhood—his boyish days—passed at schools, or among strangers—his lawless youth—the wandering, dissipated habits of later years—had always left a feeling of discomfort, and made him conscious that this was not happiness.

Paradoxical as it may sound, amid those miscalled pleasures, which generally destroy the last particle of taste for a domestic life—amid pursuits which are the very antipodes to peace and quiet—in Gerald, their indulgence

seemed only to have strengthened some early, but long checked tendency, for the repose of home—a tendency brought forth, probably, during the few years that his mother lived. And now this unconscious yearning was satisfied, and better feelings flourished—better habits were formed, under the very circumstances that are, usually, most adverse to their existence.

The house, small as it was, contained more comforts than he had ever found at his expensive hotel residence ; his wants, his wishes, were consulted, divined, and indulged, as he never before remembered them to have been. All this he joyfully accepted, and never paused to calculate the cost thereof. Enough for him that the passing hour was pleasant—why mar its enjoyment, by anticipating that the next might be less so ?

Lord Blaymore had so early, and so constantly, mingled in fashionable life, that at eight-and-twenty he had learned it by heart. He saw the hollowness of its mirth—he heard

the echo of the fool's bells in its music—he detected the tinsel of its glitter, and found that its flowers were artificial. He had feasted, to satiety, at luxurious banquets, and had quaffed the poisoned draught, till his brain had reeled ; and it was now refreshing, beyond expression, to look at nature and reality—to have a home—to have a welcome—and, oh ! such a welcome !

He knew that here he was thought of when absent, and his return expected with delight ; such was now his life.

There was another seeming incongruity in his character—but those who have watched the true Epicurean, will have no difficulty in recognising the *pococurante* truthfulness of the portraiture.

Spite of his reckless extravagance, of his absolute squandering ; his own individual habits were very simple, and his wants moderate—for his was the real philosophy that will not have the trouble which superfluity always entails. '*L'embarras des richesses*' would have been, to

him, a literal embarrassment ; and money was only valued as buying what he really and immediately wanted, or as freeing him from duns.

Under the influence of strong excitement or strong temptation, he would gamble away hundreds, and involve himself in all the annoyance of so-called honourable debts ; but, if he could not pay the tailor, he would go without the coat, and desire Connell to brush up the old one ; if he could not pay for the beautiful horse, which his friend offered ‘a dead bargain,’ he would, without the least hesitation, appear in the Park, riding on his quiet grey—though to be well mounted was, perhaps, the one luxury he most especially valued.

No ; not on himself, in one sense, had his fine fortune been lavished ; it had vanished in costly presents to the worthless ; it had glittered on the round arm, or snowy neck of beauty ; it had decked out vice, and helped to make infamy more conspicuous !

As he remembered this, how different did all now seem. The simplicity of every thing

around him—the atmosphere of peace and love, in which he lived, appeared to exercise a beneficial influence on his thoughts and principles ; and often, when he looked at the beautiful face of Minnie, and contrasted her unselfish disregard of splendour and luxury—her sweet womanly care of him and his interests, he thought, with a sigh, “ Why did I not make this lovely, loving creature my wife ?—but, alas ! it is now too late.”

Again there is the echo, ‘too late.’ Oh, the ruin that mistaken notion has caused ! Oh, the tragic results of fancying it can *ever* be too late ! Because a man stands on the edge of a dangerous precipice, must he cast himself over to certain destruction ? Because a weapon wounds the skin, must it be tamely suffered to pierce the heart ? Stop in your fatal career—start aside from the menaced stroke ! It is not too late.

Look into that room, furnished with such simple elegance ; where good taste has effected so much, and a few natural flowers have given

a finish to the whole ; see that lovely woman, a pensive smile on her lips, while her large blue eyes are fixed on the infant she cradles in her arms ; and now, she raises them to the face of one, who might be taken for a perfect model of manly beauty, both in form and feature. How fondly he is gazing at that angelic countenance, and thence at the smiling innocent babe ; he gently touches the dimpled fingers—they imprison his—and, with one hand enclosed in this caress, which retains it as if with a giant's grasp, his other arm glides round them both. He presses the mother with affectionate fervour to his heart, and murmurs out a blessing. Oh, will it be heard ? Oh, will it—can it—be answered ?

But stop—is it only fancy ? or are there not dim, misty outlines of hideous figures in that darkened corner?—is it—can it be—the shadow of Sin, and her constant attendant, Sorrow ? Alas ! yes—already the latter advances—her melancholy shade falls over the faces so beautiful, so full of love, and each

represses a sigh. Minnie's eyes fill with tears, as she half closes them, and stoops to kiss the soft cheek of her child—Gerald turns away, and thinks of what they both are, and of what they might have been !

There were times, during this strange life, when, if any one could have looked into his heart, and seen all the remorse—all the love that he felt—could have known how it overflowed with tenderness—and the deep, solemn resolve he made, that, as for him, she had become an outcast, cut off from all society—so he would, henceforth, devote himself to making that solitude happy, and shelter her, by his care and presence, from the obloquy to which he had exposed her. Ah ! could this have been known, tears must have flowed, to think how the heart now filled with kind watchfulness, had once been the prey of all unholy passions—but oh ! how much more sorrowfully would Charity lament, if the thought intruded ; probably—only too probably—will these evil spirits again make it their dwelling.

If angels *can* weep, it must be at scenes like this—where the powers of light and darkness are contending for such a prize, and when the latter prevail.

But time went on, and it was during an unexpected visit to London, in reference to some old debts, which had lately troubled him; that Gerald met Edith as she was riding. He was well aware of her father's anger against him, for having broken his promise; and this, very soon after it had been given; and it was while attending her, in the several subsequent rides, that he first suspected she viewed him with a sentiment more tender than mere cousinly affection.

But this suspicion in no manner shook his allegiance elsewhere—for Edith was, in his opinion, plain and ungraceful. Eminently unattractive to him, though he appreciated her talents, and deferred to her understanding. His attentions to her, therefore, were exactly such as he would have paid to any lady who honoured him with her company—

for it was not possible for him to be otherwise than courteous—very difficult for him to avoid being dangerously tender—dangerous, indeed, to Edith, whose hope threw its own attractive colouring over all he did.

Then came their sudden separation, owing to Sir Rupert's death. And when Gerald's presence was rather importunately required in London, respecting the property which had lately become his, his delay was caused by the illness of the little girl, whose life, for some weeks, was in imminent danger.

Among two or three large debts that he had contracted, there was one which, on every account, he was most anxious to pay. Many years ago, when a run of ill luck had drained almost every available source, one of his friends had generously and opportunely come forward and helped him.

“My good fellow,” he said, “the means by which you are going to raise this sum are absolutely ruinous. Those harpies, the Jews, will grind your very life out. I have this

money, and really do not now want it—give me any security you can, and pay me fair interest, till you can conveniently return the principal."

And thus it had gone on—Lord Blaymore regularly handing over the stipulated interest, though he more than once paid double the value to have it ready ; for, in all these transactions, he was scrupulously honourable.

But his friend had lately met with a reverse of fortune, and the money, lent in this friendly way, was now needed, in order that he might embark in an undertaking that promised to be successful. Under these circumstances, every exertion was made by Gerald, so that his friend's kindness might not prove injurious to his future prospects—delay here would be ungrateful, as well as disgraceful ; and while the most ruinous schemes, regarding the remnants of his originally fine property, were revolved in his lordship's brain, came the news of the legacy, which he inherited through his mother.

Joyfully, as is known, did he close with Lady Rochedale's offer to purchase his share ; his friend was paid, and Minnie received a handsome sum to spend as she pleased.

With this came, also, a promise that the sender would soon follow ; and, as she read this precious assurance, she kissed the signature and smiled.

Destroy not her delusion—all too soon will the fearful reality burst upon her startled senses. Disturb not the slumber during which she dreams of living in a flowery Elysium—all too soon will she awake, to find that she has been sleeping within the shadow of the deadly Upas tree, whence escape is impossible.

This time it *is* too late. Too late, for all but that repentance, which is not to be repented of.

CHAPTER IV.

‘ ——— Thou art a perjur’d man,
False and perfidious, and hast made a tender
Of love and service to this lady, when
Thy soul, if thou hast any, can bear witness
That those were not thine own.’

MASSINGER.

WHEN Gerald wrote, it was, undoubtedly, his intention speedily to follow his letter; but engagement succeeded engagement. The Townley’s were earnest in pressing him to join their parties—and, more difficult still from which to escape, there were matters of business, that he must remain and settle.

The apparent facility with which one large debt had been discharged, made another creditor look about him ; and bills which bore enormous interest, again made their appearance, with a polite reminder that payment was required ; not that this was either expected or hoped for ; but, because previous experience had shown, that his lordship would sign almost anything, rather than be annoyed ; and it was still worth while to try what more he could be irritated into doing.

"Here are these confounded thieves, Slo-ran and Moss, pestering me again. I wish to heaven I could pay them, even if the last stone of the old Moat were sold for that purpose"—and as he spoke, he handed his lawyer some letters.

"Yes—I see ; they have probably heard of your having paid Mr. Jocelyn, and, I suppose, think there may be more where that came from ; but that debt was quite a different affair. But it appears to me that they are already deriving a good income from you. I

wish you could punish, and astonish, them by offering payment—but, unfortunately, the entire surplus of the legacy would not be even a sop to Cerberus, when compared with the whole of their claim."

"Nor should they have fingered it, even if I still possessed it, which I do not. Like Cæsar, I carry my fortune with me—and in a deuced small compass, too," he said, laughing, and showing a purse, that looked any thing but plethoric.

The lawyer smiled. "I hate to have much money," resumed his lordship. "I suppose that is the reason I scarcely ever have; for I do not know what to do with it, and so always spend it like a fool. I want some one to take care of me"—and the gay laugh disappeared; "but this will not settle these dirty knaves, or their rascally debt; what had I better do?"

"That which all the world says your lordship is going to do," replied the man of law, drily; and, seeing Lord Blaymore's look of astonishment and enquiry, he added—

"Pardon me, my lord ; but I merely echo public report. It is said, that you are about to marry one of our richest heiresses, Miss Rochedale ; now nothing can be wiser or better for your bill holders' claims—and, if I may be permitted the freedom," glancing at his client's handsome face, "for the lady herself."

His client coloured deeply ; and, affecting to read the letters again, when he next spoke, it was on a different subject.

Now, this was not the first time that the idea of marrying Edith had been presented to him. Sir Frederic Townley had, one evening, in a very significant manner, alluded to her as a devilish fine woman—as one whose dignified appearance, in his opinion, compensated for mere beauty. "A pretty girl," he oracularly observed, "is often quite a take in. At thirty, she looks forty ; and at forty, sixty ; and, unless she is very careful of herself and her dress, sinks into a faded dowdy at five-and-twenty."

"Upon my soul," he said, kindling with the subject, "I sometimes think Miss Rochedale really handsome; and when I look at her fortune," he continued, laughing, "I have not the smallest doubt about it!"

"Edith has certainly gained, rather than lost, by the progress of time," replied Gerald. "I remember when I used to think her a heavy-featured, plain girl, not remarkable for good temper; but with her intelligent look, and, as you remark, her stately air, she must always command attention."

"Perhaps, I am not quite in order," resumed the Baronet; "but, do you know, Blaymore, I have sometimes thought, that this Minerva—so cold, so distant with all others—has a very different look and manner, when a certain handsome cousin appears."

"Nonsense!" said the certain handsome cousin; and he began, in a hurried tone, to speak of some pictures he had seen in Paris; but he observed Edith's looks more narrowly, and remembered the remarks she made more

correctly ; and thought Sir Frederic had not made a very great mistake, in what he had declared to be the result of his observation. Still, the idea of Edith, and a marriage with her, was strange and unpleasant ; nor was it, till he followed up the hint already received, with the remarks made by his man of business, that he thought of it, with reference to his debts, and her fortune.

But, having obtained admittance, it is astonishing how soon the notion made itself at home—and brought in its train, first the prospect of one advantage, and then of another—till Lord Blaymore began to think that a marriage, which would secure all these, was not to be despised. And when he next met Edith, his attentions were more marked than ever, and her heart fluttered with delight.

Ah ! it would have effectually chased away the becoming smile from her lips, could she have surmised that, while fixing his eyes on her face, he was contrasting it with one that, to him, was the perfection of beauty—and that

he was reminded, by her haughty step, of one whose every movement was grace, and whose every tone was harmony.

And again did the inconsistency of all he did, evince itself, in the resolution to which this comparison and remembrance led. He would marry Edith, because he so passionately, so entirely loved Minnie ! Yes,—he should then be enabled to surround her with all the luxuries his limited means had hitherto prevented him from offering.

Alas ! by what miserable sophistry do we let ourselves be convinced, when we *will* it to be so ; for Gerald had had numberless opportunities of knowing, how little the unfortunate object of his miscalled love cared for these things ; nay, it had constantly endeared her the more to him, when he observed, how simple her tastes were, and how little she valued splendour and show.

But had he, then, begun to misjudge her, that he could believe she would still further descend in degradation, and purchase luxuries,

or even necessaries, by means of her rival's wealth?—notwithstanding, all she had forfeited, in casting from her a woman's crown of glory, had he forgotten the refinement that still marked her sentiments?—had he so fatally misunderstood her, as to believe, that all the riches of the Indies could compensate for his presence and love?

No—no—he did not, he could not, wrong her so outrageously—he intended that she should never know the source whence more abundant means flowed—he meant that she should never hear of his marriage; and, believing that he could anticipate, and prevent every accident—fancying that he could bend all circumstances to his will, he felt sure that he could so arrange as to keep it a profound secret from her.

Pleased at the fancied success of his scheme, delighted at the future his imagination had formed, that very evening he met Edith,—offered, and was accepted.

Though Lady Rochedale's opposition had been

much more decided than her daughter had expected, she did not apprehend any further interference with her arrangements. Her mother's opinion and resolution had been expressed with an energy no less vehement than surprising — but there it would stop. Therefore, with the obstinacy and promptness, which were Edith's characteristics, she settled with Lady Townley all the details of the wedding—alleging, as a reason for her mother's absence, the reluctance she felt to lay aside her mourning, even for a day.

But the gay friend was only too glad to have so reasonable an excuse for perpetual shoppings, to care much why the party met at her house ; and though Edith requested that everything should be as quiet and private as possible, Lady Townley interpreted this injunction according to her own taste ; and if she did not have quite a public breakfast, at their fashionable residence ; she managed to have a crowded evening party, in honour of the absent bride and bridegroom.

Even with his mind wholly pre-occupied with one endeavour—that of keeping the marriage a secret from Minnie—many circumstances attending its progress could scarcely have failed to surprise, perhaps to irritate Gerald, had it not been that he was on the watch to intercept or prevent the least chance of discovery; and had so passively submitted to every arrangement made for him, that even Lady Townley had sarcastically remarked to her husband—"Either he must be absorbed in the contemplation of his expected happiness, or remarkably indifferent about it."

But, as days passed on, one thought seemed to dwell for ever in his mind—the thought of her whom he had already so deeply wronged, and on whom he was about to inflict still further injury. One terror perpetually haunted him, and cast a blight on everything—the terror of discovery; and nothing he could think of, as likely to prevent this catastrophe, was neglected. A letter was sent

off to her, dated the very day on which he had solemnly sworn to love and cherish another; and when Sir Frederic had reminded him of having the event announced in the public papers, he had replied that that had already been thought of, and required no further attention.

What, then, were his rage, his mortification, when, at Cologne, he read the few words which might render all his scheme abortive—for he remembered that, not only was the leading English paper regularly forwarded to his French residence, by his express desire, but even should Minnie fail to notice it there, the movements and doings of one so well known in Paris as he was, could scarcely fail to be known and chronicled in *Galignani*—a paper which she rarely failed to look through.

Had curses, like telegraphic messages, travelled to their right destination, Sir Frederic Townley would have fared but badly—for he it was, whose officious marplotting had destroyed a very nicely arranged plan.

"Is it announced, my dear?" he said to his wife, the day after the ceremony, as she took, and eagerly opened, the page dedicated to such information.

"No—perhaps it was sent too late"—but, as the subject had once been alluded to, it was followed up the next day, with the same disappointing result—till, deciding that Blaymore had forgotten it, or that there was some blunder, Sir Frederic wrote, and paid for the insertion of the paragraph, which, as he read it, seemed to scorch his lordship's eyes.

In this difficulty, the aid of Connell was sought. He must, without delay, proceed to Paris—where the ready wit that had so promptly accounted for his sudden departure to Lady Blaymore, must be still further engaged in his lordship's service, by inventing any falsehood that could further his plans.

That Minnie would be indignant, hurt, and alarmed, should Gerald's apprehensions be realized, was what he fully expected; but he still depended on the strength of her love for

pardon ; and believed, that, though angry, she could, towards him, never be implacable.

Connell was, therefore, provided with a letter, which his master wrote while yet under the influence of self reproach, and still smarting from the stings of conscience.

He wrote, inspired by all the passionate love he felt, which was now increased by the dread of losing her—he implored her forgiveness, with all that vehement eloquence which deep and sincere feeling calls forth—dwelt upon the motives that urged him—conjured her to let her love for him be the sole judge—and painted, in bright colours, the happiness which, he said, awaited them. She, she alone, was still the worshipped—the idolized ; for, without her, life, to him, was a hateful burthen—a dark, cheerless resting-place.

CHAPTER V.

‘Lass mich einsam und vergessen
In die fernste Wildniss fliehn !
Lass mich fort vom Sturm getrieben,
Irren, schwanken, untergehn !
Nein, dein Leiben war kien Lieben
Nie sollst du mich wiedersehen.’

EURYANTHE.

WHAT would have been the effect of this letter, had it arrived at its destination, who can say ? for it never reached Minnie.

Connell, who had, from the beginning of the intrigue, been in his master’s secret, regarding his designs upon Minnie, and by whom the letter had been opportunely forwarded from Ireland,

while Gerald himself was in the immediate neighbourhood of the Chase—Connell, who believed that his lord and foster-brother could do no wrong, even when planning the destruction of one so helpless, had, lately, rather doubted his master's infallibility ; and, if he had not transferred his allegiance to Minnie, he, at least, allowed her to share it. During his residence with them, near Paris, he had had so many opportunities of watching her conduct—of seeing that, though led fatally astray on one occasion, there was yet so much that was right and true in her character ; that all the enthusiasm of his nation was enlisted in her favour ; and, as he witnessed the happy domestic life his lord now led, he sometimes ventured to hope, that the wrong might still, in some measure, be remedied by a marriage.

“ Why not make her his wife, the beauty, and she one that any man would be proud of ? Just the very lady to put order into our affairs, and make us and the old Moat look up again with the best.”

Such thoughts as these were only the echo of his master's; but—but—and Gerald heard the inauspicious 'but,' and was influenced by it. Connell resolutely closed his ears, or snapped his fingers, at its insinuations.

Once, during the preparation for the marriage, to which Lord Blaymore had never, to him, even indirectly, alluded—once, Connell incurred a reprimand, such as had never before been bestowed upon him.

"Why, Connell, you are looking as solemn as an undertaker, when on duty," remarked his lordship, one morning, while giving him directions as to the proposed tour, but still not naming the bride; "why, man, what are you thinking of?"

"Of the sweet mistress, yonder away, my lord," replied Connell—and his look, if possible, became yet more solemn.

Starting, as if stung by a viper, Lord Blaymore's face flushed, from mingled and contradictory emotions; and sternly bidding his servant remember to whom he spoke, and

not presume on long acquaintance and old ties, he left the room, taking with him a host of thoughts, that asserted their power, and would not be banished.

Since that time, Connell had never, by hint or look, reminded Gerald of the subject. But now his services were required ; and, forgetting his master's former anger, in his present perplexity, and himself taking a deep interest in the matter, he promptly undertook to do all that he possibly could, to render his journey successful.

Scarcely allowing himself needful rest, or even refreshment, Connell travelled on to Strasburg ; but there met with a most vexatious delay, owing to some informality in his passport ; and though, by liberal bribery and ceaseless importunity, this difficulty was overcome, it was ten days before he reached Paris, and then, so late, as to make him decide on not attempting to seek an interview that night. Still, so great was his desire to perform his errand, and so painful were some

vague apprehensions that perpetually intruded, that he set out for the quiet suburb near which Minnie lived. Having secured a bed at the small auberge, a restless feeling prompted him to take a peep at the house. He should be so glad to see that all looked as he hoped. He could more quietly take a few hours' rest after this assurance. And again he started forth.

Half-an-hour's brisk walking carried him to the very gate. He anxiously glanced up at the windows. Not a light was visible—not even at the windows of the rooms occupied as a nursery, and by Minnie herself. A large dog, a great favourite with his master, though generally chained during the day, was always let loose at night—a precaution not likely to be neglected when only women were the inhabitants. Connell softly whistled—no Brian replied by a joyous bark of recognition. “Brian—Brian,” he now called—the first time, very gently—but, urged by fear, the second time, aloud. Still all was silent; and, trying to quiet his rising alarm by the

thought that, perhaps, the noble animal, for greater security, was taken into the house, he once more looked for the glimmer of a light—once more called—but in vain. Nothing appeared—nothing answered; and, with a heavy heart, he retraced his steps.

Scarcely, however, had he walked half a mile on his return, when something came bounding towards him, and, with a yelp of delight, Brian leaped up, and almost knocked his friend down by his wild and noisy way of testifying his joy.

“Brian, my brave fellow!” he cried, caressing the faithful creature. “Why, how come you here—meeting, not following me?” but, of course, receiving no intelligible reply beyond repeated barks of pleasure, together they proceeded towards the inn.

“Ah, ah!” said the landlord; “I was sure he would find you. Why, he was ready to strangle himself in his efforts to get loose.”

“But how, then, came he here?” enquired Connell, dreading the reply.

“ Why, some days ago, when Madame Fitzgerald left, she sent the dog to me, knowing that I should be certain to take care of him till you came. Some bad news, it seems, has arrived—I hope nothing connected with Monsieur. I have not seen Madame since she left, but my wife is quite in a taking about her. Nannette has gone with her and the child ; and old Marie has the house in charge for the proprietor. But, *mon Dieu !* how surprised you look. I made sure, when I saw you, that you had come about some packages which I hear are left—but everything is quite paid up.”

During this long explanation, Connell had the utmost difficulty to refrain from loud expressions of terror, grief, and astonishment ; and, as it was, the last feeling was displayed, though the first was predominant.

“ Ah ! yes !” he said ; “ I have come about some property that still remains ; but Marie was in bed, I suppose, for I could not make her hear ; but Monsieur and Madame are quite

well ;" and then, pleading fatigue, and endeavouring to appear unconcerned, he took a slight repast, and went to bed. A few hours of bodily rest was all that he obtained there—for his mind was busy endeavouring to arrange what must be done, under these unexpected circumstances. But he could decide on nothing, till he had seen Marie, and heard all she could tell—so, by daylight, he was up, and again away to the deserted abode.

In reply to his enquiries, which were artfully contrived to extract information, without betraying his entire ignorance, Marie could only tell him, that, nearly a fortnight ago, her mistress had been plunged into the most overwhelming grief at some unexpected news—and that, directly she recovered from the terrible effects this produced, she had sent for the landlord, paid him the required notice, and discharged every bill that was owing—then packed up all that belonged to her, and, with the child and Nannette, had gone to Paris.

"Here," she continued, "are several packages directed to you," showing him, what he supposed, contained articles belonging to his master.

And now to trace her—a step, at first, not difficult to take; and he discovered that she really had gone to Paris, for there he found Nannette, and obtained from her information, which satisfied him, that she had seen the fatal announcement, and that the knowledge of Lord Blaymore's marriage had caused this proceeding.

But, from this point, all clue to Minnie was lost!

Baffled at every enquiry, Connell was doubly perplexed; his unfortunate delay at Strasburg had completely deranged the plan that had been settled for a regular communication. Letters had already been detained, misdirected, and lost; and now this precipitate removal, and Minnie's subsequent disappearance, increased his embarrassment, while it paralyzed his movements, or rendered

them useless ; and Connell, whose brain was none of the best at disentangling a difficulty, or solving a knotty point, scarcely knew how to act, so as not to complicate the affair.

At last, two letters, which he found waiting for him when he paid his daily visit to the post-office, greatly relieved him. By the recent date of one, he could now write to the direction given with a strong hope that his reply would be received ; and, in the meantime, his exertions were not relaxed—his search was continued without interruption—but in vain ; and though, when he wrote to his master, he spoke of hoping that the next letter would contain some further information, he himself ceased to hope for success. Minnie and the child had disappeared, and left no trace by which they could be discovered.

CHAPTER VI.

‘ And woman, who had wept her richest dower.’

BARRY CORNWALL.

‘ I loved her, and destroy’d her !’

BYRON.

AFTER Gerald had set out for London, on business connected with his legacy, and to take measures for paying Mr. Jocelyn’s claims, Minnie’s life passed in its usual quiet manner ; though no longer with the monotony that was once always felt during his absence—for she had her child now to care for, to think for—to watch and to love. And, though more frequently than ever—when she was alone—

tears would fill her eyes, and a look of the most touching sadness dwell on her lovely face, she would kiss her baby, and try to smile, and feel thankful, as she remembered that Gerald had said, the birth of this little innocent had made him, if possible, happier than ever ; and she would watch the returning glow of health on its delicate cheek, and picture his delight at seeing his pretty Geraldine, whom he had left slowly recovering from illness, healthy and strong ; and showing her pleasure, at finding herself again in the arms that had so patiently held her while suffering and ill.

“ Ah, fairy ! ” she said, playing with the beautiful child, “ that will be a joyful day for us both, when he returns ; he never looks so handsome, little queen, as when your sweet face is pressed to his ! ”—and she went on with a game of bo-peep, through one of his letters, till all was forgotten; except that she had her child on her knees, and that Gerald loved them both !

And how charming his letters were ! how full of assurances of undiminished affection ! how ardent his expressions of love ! how he spoke of wishing again to be with them—to be at home !

But as this period approached—and how correctly, in her mind, had she registered the day, the hour—she remarked that his letters became shorter, and were much less frequent. “ Ah ! never mind ; it is because he is so occupied in concluding the business, that still detains him.” And though Minnie could not help telling him how she longed to see him, she half reproached herself for this selfishness, when it was too late to recall her letter, or unsay her words—for the knowledge that she was anxious would grieve him.

After all, hers was a woman’s loving heart, though a very erring one !

One letter—it was the last—was particularly unsatisfactory—though, perhaps, Gerald had never uttered the feelings of his heart with more irresistible eloquence ; there was a

mournful tenderness throughout that made her almost sad. At first, she felt alarmed ; the writing was irregular, and, in some parts, she detected an incoherency, quite unlike his general style ;—was he ill ? But no ; he expressly alluded to an excursion of pleasure, which would occupy some weeks ; and during which he feared his correspondence must be uncertain, perhaps altogether interrupted. Still, she was not satisfied ; and read the letter over and over again, always with the same result—an impression that something unusual, or unpleasant had happened. But she roused herself from a fit of deep thought, and ascribed a sadness, which had fallen on her, to the disappointment she felt, at learning that his return was postponed.

Were those fearful shadows becoming more distinct ? Was sin more evident ? Was sorrow drawing nearer ?

At last, the tempest which she had sowed burst over her, and laid her prostrate ; and by the same blow it shivered her idol to frag-

ments ; and though, alas ! these ruins were still worshipped, its altar was no longer decked with blooming flowers and sweet-scented garlands—but hopes blighted—reputation destroyed—a heart broken—a life rendered miserable and disgraced ; these—these were the sad sacrifices now heaped on it—while sighs and groans break forth, that tell of happiness lost for ever—and tears, such as despair forces to gush out, fall from eyes that have looked on the destruction of all most prized !

It had happened, as Gerald had foreseen and dreaded—*Galignani* copied the announcement of his marriage—and, oh ! who can tell the agony with which that was read !

There she still sits, her complexion almost livid from intense emotion—the paper firmly grasped by her rigid fingers ; while her eyes are fixed on the fatal words, which she appears to be intently reading—alas ! they are already engraven on heart and brain. A sharp cry, as from one in the extremity of acute agony, at last burst from her lips, and a paroxysm of

hysterical weeping followed. Happily, this was indulged in undisturbed, or the effort to restrain her tears might have had a fearful result. Again she read what seemed to turn her to ice—she shivered from head to foot—and again she wept less violently, but, oh ! how sadly—even more sadly than at first.

“ And you, then, have left me !” she exclaimed, in tones that well expressed her deep distress ; but there was no anger, scarcely even reproach, in their sad pathos, as she repeated—“ And you have left me—me who so loved you—left your innocent child ! What had we done, to be thus cast away ?”— and her words sounded more as if she were expositulating with him, for inflicting an injury on himself by this desertion, than as upbraiding him for his baseness, his cruelty, to her and her infant.

Poor Minnie !—and it is with no morbid sentimentality that she is thus designated. But the wages of sin are very terrible—and she had sinned ; therefore, she must take them—erring and fallen as she was, though

the original brightness was tarnished, and the sun of her happiness had set, how much that was good and amiable still remained!—quite enough to change the frown to the tear, to convert the half-uttered reproach into a sigh of pity, and to make us ask—who is without sin? let him first cast a stone.

She walked towards the pretty little cot, in which lay her sleeping child—but though tears rained down her face, that sight reminded her, that there was one helpless being now dependent upon her alone, and made her aware that no time must be spent in the indulgence of sorrow—when every moment should be applied to the performance of this new and solemn duty. But thoughts would not hence—and long, long did she stand gazing on the beautiful sleeper, while memory was very busy bringing to mind happy scenes of the past, which the sad reality of the present remorselessly destroyed, as fast as they appeared.

Perhaps there was a faint whisper of comfort in the thought, which at last suggested

itself, that, in acting as he had done, Gerald had not anticipated the whole consequences his proceeding would have.

She knew that he was both annoyed and embarrassed, by these recent, unexpected, and importunate demands—the temptation to be free from them might have been his chief, perhaps, his only, inducement—and he *might* have fancied, that this step would make no difference to her, or change the tenor of her life—and the hope that he still loved her, awoke a faint flutter of happiness, that was immediately banished, by the strong throb of indignation, when she thought that he should, that he could, believe her so degraded as to submit to this; and her cheeks burned with shame at the mere supposition.

Oh, no!—disgraced as she was, there was a limit even to that—and her tearful eyes were raised, and her small hands were clasped, as she knelt down by her child's side, and vowed a solemn vow, that, henceforth, she was devoted to that child alone—for her only would she

live, and, by the labour of her hands, struggle to support them both.

She then rose ; and, passing her hand over her brow, as if to clear away some palpable impediment ; with a strange composure, she summoned Nannette, and told her that unexpected and sad news necessitated their immediate removal ; and, having given her the requisite orders, she proceeded, still with extraordinary clearness and decision, to carry out the preliminary steps of her plan. Not a moment was wasted ; and, when all was ready, she set out for Paris, making no scruple to use the remainder of the money that Gerald had sent. This could not have come from *that* source, from which she firmly resolved never to profit ; and, as they journeyed on, she finally decided on her proceedings.

Desperate circumstances rendered her desperate ; and, directly she had sheltered her helpless companions, she set forth on her errand.

This was to the house of the French lady,

with whom her aunt had placed her, and of whose kindness she had seen enough, during her residence with her, to make her hope that the aid, she meant to ask, would not be denied.

We linger not on the interview. Where charity abounds, the tale of sin and suffering excites the greatest sorrow—the most sincere sympathy. Where repentance is genuine, self-reproach is so loud, that the voice of friendly consolation, is silenced in the clamours of the awakened conscience—suffice it to say, that, grieved and shocked as she was at this termination to a career which she had predicted would be more than usually successful, Madame Delacour listened with sorrowful kindness to Minnie's story, but shook her head incredulously when she repeated her fixed determination never again, voluntarily, to see Lord Blaymore.

“ Better prevent the possibility of meeting, by taking shelter with your friends—perhaps your aunt”—said Madame Delacour.

"Not for worlds would I have her know," exclaimed Minnie, interrupting her, with every mark of terror. "Oh, no—her glance of contempt would kill me; her scornful reproaches would be too bitter to bear. She is good herself, but—but she can not pardon; and why should I expose myself to her just, but severe indignation? Not to her—not to her."

"I need not say, that it is impossible for me to receive you and your child here, even for a day; but I will find you an asylum where, I think, you will be free from molestation and discovery—where I can see you, help and advise you, and where you can remain till you are capable of looking resolutely at the future, and able to form some plan that is practicable."

So Nannette was taken into Madame Delacour's service, for the present; and Minnie and her little girl were so carefully removed to the house of the woman who worked for Madame, that Connell lost all traces of them; and his

ill-success being communicated to his master, produced such a paroxysm of rage, remorse, and terror, that it was well he read the letter when alone.

Dearly did Minnie pay for the unnatural composure that had sustained her, till she felt herself safe from discovery ; and, if Madame Delacour had felt her compassion excited while listening to the sad tale, how much more powerfully was it called forth, when one whom she had known and loved, as the innocent, beautiful, gentle girl, lay on her bed, unconscious of everything ; and passing through those dreadful changes to which delirium subjects its victims—during which it was impossible to hear her wild ravings, without a shudder—impossible to hear her plaintive expostulations, without tears.

CHAPTER VII.

'Though thy slumbers may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep ;
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone.
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gather'd in a cloud,
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.'

BYRON.

IF ever bridegroom performed a wedding tour under difficulties, it certainly was Gerald, Lord Blaymore ; for, instead of finding letters awaiting him at the various places he had

named—and having, as he hoped, his apprehensions quieted, regarding the effect of the oft-execrated paragraph—no news of any kind reached him.

Often, when Lady Blaymore felt gratified at the solicitude which made him hasten forwards, to secure the best of everything to greet her arrival; and when he refused to believe that the courier or valet could perform this duty properly—he had eagerly galloped on, and rushed to the post-office—or lingered about, hoping for letters from Connell; but, for some time, all in vain.

His anxiety and suspense were almost intolerable; nor was it till he had fretted himself into a fever, that the letter, recounting Connell's delay at Strasburg, reached him. Cursing the pedantry of officials, the letter was, however, read with something like a feeling of relief—for he had begun to dread, he scarcely knew what; and this, as it contained no news that gave consistency to his fears, was a sort of reprieve.

But the next tidings from Paris dashed down any faint hope that might yet linger ; for, in them, Connell related Minnie's flight, and his hitherto unsuccessful attempts to find her.

Gerald then gave way ; and at Milan he had so sharp an attack of illness, that Edith took the alarm ; and, perceiving his evident impatience to return—as already related—their journey was shortened ; and, by his invention of riots in Paris, the return was effected without stopping at that city.

But Paris was the very place from which his thoughts were scarcely ever absent ; it was the place where, he felt sure, he should find his still loved Minnie. And once found ! Ah, he would so humbly implore pardon—so earnestly sue to be forgiven, that she, ever gentle, and, as he fancied, ever loving, would not, could not, resist his entreaties.

Yes, yes ; thus it must be. How could she be stern when he was sorrowful ? and all would again be well.

Again be well ! Had it *ever* been well ?

His journey to Ireland was all a fiction.
As fast as horses and wind could convey him,
he was hurrying from his rich, happy bride to
his deserted, miserable mistress ; his heart
beating high with hope ; his eyes sparkling
with pleasure at this renewal of his freedom,
and his anticipations of finding Minnie.

Base, dishonoured man ! double traitor !
doubly false and cruel !

Arrived in Paris, he was met by Connell,
whose face announced nothing that his master
most longed to hear. But Gerald at once
applied himself to the task, the success of
which involved so much ; and by untiring
exertions, and securing the efficient services
of the police, Minnie was traced to St. Malo ;
there, it seemed, she waited one day for the
vessel, that took her to Jersey. At that
place, she was again taken ill ; but, after a
very short stay, she sailed for Southampton ;
thence to London she was easily followed,
and there all trace of her further movements

was lost ; and, in spite of the most unremitting effort to regain it, lost it still remained.

And now began that inner strife, which rages on furiously, while, externally, all appears at peace. Now was heard that voice, which mingled with every sound—the voice of conscience ! Now came the pangs of remorse, which no skill can remove, no medicine alleviate ; and Gerald groaned in agony, and tried to escape, but could not. The avenging Eumenides were ever on his track—and he knew it ! The horrible fancies that filled his mind were almost maddening—one image disappearing, only to give place to another, still more terrible.

Want—death—death in its many forms—degradation, from the mere idea of which he recoiled, with sharp agony—alternately harassed him ; and many and many a time, had he turned and followed some miserable outcast—while he trembled with apprehension at what her face might reveal ; but it was not—it was not—he could not finish the sentence ;

and, with a feeling of thankfulness, deep and sincere, would he drop a coin into the hand of the astonished wanderer, and bid her sin no more !

Hitherto, Gerald had been by far too consistent in his Epicurean philosophy, to allow anything to dwell on his mind, that annoyed or disturbed him. Directly he felt that the rose-leaf was crumpled, it must be put aside, so that he might repose on his Sybarite couch with perfect ease ; when creditors became urgent, if their claims could not be satisfied, at least, their importunity must be stopped—and this, at any possible sacrifice. The present must be made easy—no matter for the future. He was just the man to have said—“*Après nous le Déluge*”—for thus said the whole tenor of his existence.

But it was different now ; and, had not Time effected his usual remedy—had not Custom wrought her usual hardening process —when, week after week, and month after month, this torture of uncertainty went on—

Gerald sometimes felt that he must become mad or die.

But though remorse remained, its keenness was blunted — though disappointment inflicted its wound, it was not so deep ; and though he became conscious of a great change in himself, in his habits, in his pursuits, and knew that the bloom was taken from everything he looked at—the flavour from all he tasted —though he felt languid and apathetic—gradually he resumed much of his old manner ; while no amount of money or trouble was spared in trying to penetrate the sad mystery of Minnie's fate, and that of his child. When he found that all these efforts were unavailing, he tried to grapple with his torment, and fling it from him—he struggled to recal his former careless gaiety, when, even in the midst of his greatest embarrassment, his pleasure was unruffled ; but it would no longer do—the terror now, was like the garment of Nessus, and clung immoveably to him. The gaiety was false—the mirth a delusion ; and often was his heart

torn with anguish when some startling resemblance to the sweet, fair face he still loved, brought back, with revived reality, the memory of her devotion and her loss !

CHAPTER VIII.

‘Now, here’s an odd surprise: all these dead men, you shall see rise up presently, at a certain note that I have made.’

REHEARSAL.

PERCY ROCHEDALE had now been some time at Malta, wearying for the orders that should command the removal of his regiment; when the news that it was just possible his generous friend, Sir Rupert, might visit him there, gave a change to his hopes; and now most earnestly did he wish that all things might remain stationary.

As we know, he had not suffered the cor-

respondence between him and his friends in England to languish ; and the letter, that announced the anticipated journey of the Rochedales, while it confirmed rumours that had reached him of Sir Rupert's illness, gave him pleasure, from the hope that permanent amendment in his health would result from this plan.

One day, when in company with some brother officers, they were all lounging about the landing-place, and watching a steamer, that had just arrived from the Ionian Islands, one of the party exclaimed—"Look at that group in deep mourning ; what pretty children those are. I suppose that gentlemanly-looking man is their father. Let us go nearer"—and, taking Percy's arm, they were soon in the centre of the confusion.

"Take care, Pauline," said the stranger in mourning, already alluded to, speaking to a handsome girl about ten or eleven years old—"leave your doll—it shall be looked after ;" and, as she turned to obey, her large hat,

which was untied, blew over the ship's side, and would have fallen in the mud of the place, had not Percy dexterously caught it.

"Oh, my hat!" cried the child; but she laughed heartily, as she saw Percy gravely balancing it on his stick, and, with a pretty blush, and "thank you, sir," took it from him.

The gentleman, also, on passing with his son in his arms, bowed and looked his thanks.

"I advise you to wait for her, Rochedale," observed his companion; "everything looks as if she would have plenty of the needful."

"In that case, I should be certain to wait, and wait in vain," replied Percy, laughing.

And, having passed the time in looking after everything that did not concern them, much more assiduously than those whose duty it was—having laughed at some disasters, and helped to repair others—again these victims of *ennui* sauntered to their barracks.

Well may there be a verb, especially dedicated to the service of men in garrison!

Two days passed, on both of which Percy met the gentleman, and once his daughter; the former evidently lionizing; and, on each occasion, a polite bow was exchanged. But, the next evening, as he was dining with a large party, at one of the superior officers' rooms, this very gentleman sat nearly opposite to him, and was evidently making Percy the subject of his conversation.

Seen thus, without his hat, Percy thought he looked nearly sixty—closer observation made him decide that he was not so old; but his hair was quite white, though the soft waving lines showed that, in youth, it was probably beautiful, and had added to the effect of features still very fine. His figure was elegant or graceful, rather than commanding; while a look of melancholy in the dark-blue eyes was of so peculiar a character, as to be remembered, and recal the whole face—to which it gave a remarkable expression—long after that face had ceased to be gazed on.

“ I thought I heard the name of Roche-

dale," he remarked to Captain Harrington, his neighbour.

" You did," he replied. " Look across, lower down—that good-looking fellow, who is so busy whispering nonsense to Lady Flora, is he ; he has only lately joined ours. What a confounded flirt that Lady Flora is ! They will have the old governor observing them, if they do not mind."

" The nonsense does, indeed, seem very agreeable to her," remarked the stranger, with a smile. " But, pray, is the whisperer related to the Rochedales of the Chase ?"

" Oh, yes !—not the son, only a distant relative. Do you know any of them ? Shall I introduce you, when the ladies leave us ?"

Without replying to the first question, the gentleman eagerly accepted the offer ; and then immediately fell into such deep thought, that the rattle-brained Captain half repented of his off-hand proposal, to so grave a person. He, however, performed it; and, attracting Percy's attention, said—

"Rochedale, Mr. Danvers is waiting to take wine with you."

"With pleasure," returned Percy, bowing, and bestowing on Mr. Danvers one of his radiant looks and smiles; and he then politely left his place for one near Mr. Danvers, in order to render the introduction more pointed.

"I once knew your name well," said Mr. Danvers—"and nearly seventeen years' absence from England, during which I have not kept up much correspondence, will, I hope, excuse my enquiries. Mrs. Rochedale Bevington was my particular friend"—and a deeper shade of melancholy, cast, as Percy thought, an irresistible charm over the countenance——"are you—are you acquainted with her?"

"Scarcely," replied Percy. "I have once or twice met her in society. My generous friend—my almost father—Sir Rupert Rochedale, is the head of the family. The Rochedale Bevington's are connected with him by marriage only. Do you know the Chase?"

Mr. Danvers did not know it; but Percy

was on his hobby ; and away he went, description following description, and picture succeeding picture, till he suddenly paused, remarking, with a laugh—" I have betrayed my weak point to you—but I am not often able to be so egotistical, for I seldom meet with so polite a listener."

" Interested, is the correct word," said Mr. Danvers ; " while you have been talking, though I have not lost one word, I have been living back in the past, till I remembered what I was, when very little older than you are. Sweet memories have arisen, followed by very sad ones ; but who, at my age, has not many of the latter?"—and, shaking off a mood that seemed quite out of character with place and persons, he entered into general conversation, and charmed all who were near, by the varied knowledge he displayed, and the originality and good sense of his remarks.

The acquaintance, which began at this dinner, did not end there, as the following

morning found Percy breakfasting with Mr. Danvers at his hotel, where he was introduced to the two children. He gaily claimed a long standing friendship with Pauline, as the preserver of her hat from certain destruction, and was soon in high favour with her young brother, for whom he promised to borrow a pony, and, with his papa's permission, take him a ride the next day.

Percy soon learned that the mourning was for their mother, who had been dead more than a year; and again he found himself talking of the Rochedales and the Chase—subjects to which Mr. Danvers had been quietly leading the conversation, even when talking of other things.

After this, scarcely did a day pass without the gentlemen meeting, or spending part of it together—each felt that the society of the other possessed a charm, not often found. The subdued character of Mr. Danvers, evinced in his uniformly gentle manner and benevolent sentiments, was very pleasing to the young

officer, when he found that this was accompanied by firmness and decision—while the gay, daring, often the rash opinions and conclusions of Percy—the *couleur de rose* view which he took of life, and the future; seemed to banish the melancholy thoughts that, too generally, cast their shadow over the feelings of the elder gentleman.

But the time came when they must separate. Mr. Danvers informed Percy, that he was going to Paris, where he should leave his children with some maternal relatives, while he paid a short visit to England. He gave Percy an address in Paris, by enquiring at which he would be certain of learning his actual residence, and added, in the most friendly manner—"I am so sincere in my wish to have the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance, that, unlikely as it is, that I should be in London when you return, you will always hear of my whereabouts through my lawyer;" and he gave him the direction in Lincoln's Inn.

Really flattered at this mark of esteem, Percy readily promised that he would not fail to seek him out, in one or the other of the great capitals.

It was soon after the departure of Mr. Danvers, that Percy received the sad news of Sir Rupert Rochedale's sudden death—tidings which plunged his affectionate *protégé* into the deepest grief; which was, if possible, augmented by its being out of his power to testify his love and gratitude; and pay those marks of respect to the memory of the departed, which he had always gratefully lavished on the living.

But, at this very juncture, his regiment was directed to hold itself in readiness for a move at any hour—orders to that effect being expected, by every mail that arrived.

In the interval, there was much perpetually going on; and Percy was sent on regimental business to Sicily: so that, in the answers which he returned, to both Mr. Malcolm and Mr. Cleveland, he was obliged to refer them

to official quarters for his future address, in case they wanted to communicate with him, before he himself could ascertain and inform them of it.

It was owing to this uncertainty, therefore, that he was prevented from hearing more, in detail, of subsequent events and arrangements, than the first letters had contained ; or in that from Mr. Collins, which accompanied a copy of the part of the Will which concerned him ; for, after replying to this, and stating his wishes respecting the investment of his legacy, no news from Percy reached England for months—and then, a very hurried account of an equally hurried movement, merely to say, that he was quite well, in high spirits, and animated by the hope of soon gaining his troop.

Unsatisfactory as this correspondence had now become, Percy's friends were truly thankful to hear as they did ; for part of the regiment to which he belonged, in going from Malta to Syria, had encountered fearful storms

—and many an anxious thought had turned towards him from his affectionate friends—and many a time had Maggy been kept awake, listening to the howling wind, and praying and hoping that one, whom she had never forgotten, might not be exposed to its fury.

CHAPTER IX.

'Such lavish love, such prodigal devotion,
Such worship, tenderness, and boundless service,
I never thought to see—nor can describe.
No heart so cold, but must be warmed by it;
No heart so full, but must find her a place.'

Of course, Maggy was very often at the Chase, while Lord and Lady Blaymore were there; indeed, Edith seemed always especially glad to have one close at hand, whose sunny temper appeared to have some magic power in dispersing the clouds that so often settled on her own. Besides, Maggy was now an acknowledged Rochedale; and Lady Blaymore

had quite enough family pride, to keep her from offering a slight to one, who claimed kindred to that name, even had her cousin been less agreeable to her, than she really was. But, in this case, she felt somewhat proud that so near a relative was, in every way, entitled to the most distinguished respect.

Edith, herself, was never seen to greater advantage than when presiding over the splendid hospitalities of the Chase; and never did she appear more amiable than when in the society of her husband, whose mere presence seemed to charm away the haughty coldness of her general manner, and even to soften the harsh tones of her imperious voice.

To him, she was not only affectionate, but gentle, tender, eager to yield, ready to be guided. Gerald liked company, and the house was filled with guests; he liked gaiety, and Edith almost wearied herself in devising some fresh amusement, some unexpected diversion.

And here Maggy's aid was invaluable ; here the infinite resources of Herr Von Rüdiger were beyond all price ;—and though the poetic, childlike character of the latter, was little calculated to win Edith, her husband had often met him at the Parsonage, and had spoken so enthusiastically of his genius and originality, that she, without further hesitation, adopted him ; and he was scarcely less at the Chase than Maggy.

And Gerald, how did he accept all this homage ; did it banish painful recollections ? did it blot out one image ? did the incense, now offered, cast into oblivion that which was once so precious ?

To the unobservant, nothing could be more captivating than his whole manner—obliging, courteous, almost chivalrous as that was ; and those, who never look beyond the surface, pronounced Lady Blaymore a happy woman ; but Maggy, without, however, gazing far down, would have said—“All this he is to every one !” and she would have said right.

It would have been impossible for a man, whose character was so heterogeneous as his was—where the extremes of good and evil were alternately preponderating—now one influencing him, and showing what was bright—now the other leading him, a willing captive, into hateful vices—it would have been impossible for him not to have felt grateful to the woman, whose love had been as consistent and evident as was that of Edith; and who had, with peculiar delicacy and generosity, so freely shared her large wealth with him.

By her means, he was disengaged of all debts; a large sum had been devoted to repairs at the Moat; and, though the simple habits already alluded to, rendered him careless of luxury, he was neither insensible to its advantages, nor to that love, which so prodigally laid the means for its attainment at his feet.

He began, also, to feel gratified at the admiration his wife generally excited—to be proud of the queenly dignity of her manner,

and the stately grace, which careful practice had rendered peculiarly her own; and, when he beheld her presiding over a large society in her ancestral home, surrounded by the numerous tokens of lofty, if not of noble descent, he remembered, with something very like satisfaction, that she was his wife; and his fine eyes would turn to the happy hostess with a look that, in her estimation, was ample reward for exertions a hundred fold more fatiguing—for amusements a thousand times more costly—for, to her, nothing was insignificant that interested him—no attention too minute, no precaution tiresome—if it could avoid annoyance, or offence, to him.

Even her dress—a matter which, at one time, was very briefly discussed with the milliner—had now become quite a study. Edith criticised her own face and figure with the most unsparing severity, and had become quite an oracle, as regarded the appropriateness of colour and form, when choosing for herself; and, by the exquisite art with which

she threw into the shade, as much as possible, all that, in her appearance, was defective, ungraceful, and harsh—many, who remembered what she had been years ago, were surprised at a result, which they fancied was an advantageous change, produced by time.

“How very much Lady Blaymore is improved in manner and expression,” remarked Mrs. Cleveland to her husband. “I am ashamed to remember that I once almost disliked her, and certainly never thought to hear myself call her handsome. Her hands and arms are models—and, except Maggy’s, hers are the most beautiful teeth I ever saw; when she smiles, you quite forget that the mouth is so very plain.”

“I suppose,” he replied, “that is because Lady Blaymore is better tempered than Miss Rochedale used to be—when the latter, she seemed as if she never knew how to smile; and it is a good thing for his lordship that she is changed;” —for he had not forgotten several proofs of an ill-regulated character, which he

had witnessed, during the short period when he discharged his duties as executor.

“ Oh ! my cousin Edith is really very kind now,” said Maggy, whose presence Mrs. Cleveland had forgotten, when, with her usual freedom, she made the remark—“and, as to Lord Blaymore, I think he has the sweetest temper I ever knew. Like you, as regards Edith, I once thought differently of him—one remark, I remember having made to Miss Malcolm, for which I wonder she did not, at the time, reprove me—but his face is now quite a pleasing study—for something I then thought wanting, is now almost always there—and then its beauty is perfect. Besides, he is so kind—so courteous. I never saw him angry—I almost think he cannot be so.”

But, a few days after, she had an opportunity of satisfying herself, regarding this doubt—it was one that she never forgot.

It happened, that, with Edith and her husband, she was walking through a part of the fruit-garden, that communicated with the

stable-yard, by a side door. Suddenly, a violent plunging was heard, accompanied by heavy strokes of a whip, and a torrent of coarse language. For an instant, Lord Blaymore stood still, listening with looks of intense interest; but, the next moment, the face, but now so smiling and gay, completely changed its expression; and, with all the speed of passion, he opened the door, and darted into the yard—his companions quickly following.

It was exactly as he had suspected—one of the stablemen was ill-using a horse.

In a moment, with the speed of lightning, Gerald, with one hand, grasped him by the collar, and with the other, seizing the whip, in a silence, that was more terrible than the most violent words would have been, he laid stroke after stroke across the man's shoulders, till he writhed and shrieked in agony.

The strength of a giant was in those delicately-formed hands; the majestic figure seemed to dilate with the ungovernable fury that sparkled in his eyes, and gave fierce

energy to the expression of every handsome feature. Then, setting his teeth hard, till almost the whole line of even white was visible, and a flush rose to his brow—for his passion was fearful—he shortened his grasp of the whip, as if to bring the butt end into full play.

“Gerald, Gerald!” cried out Edith, pale, motionless, and leaning against the wall for support.

Maggy saw it, also—saw the terrible result. She sprang forward.

“Stop!” was all she said, but the tone was clear, and rang round and round the whole yard. “Stop!” she repeated, for the hand was actually raised to fall with, Heaven knows, what fearful effect.

Brave girl!—brave girl! She sprang up; and, with one hand catching at the coiling end of the thong, and with the other holding Gerald’s sleeve, she changed the direction of the blow, which whistled sharply and shrilly through the air.

The whip was instantly dropped — the smarting culprit was hurled furiously from him—fortunately, into the arms of one of the servants, many of whom had been drawn thither by the tumult.

Then only did Gerald find words.

“ Scoundrel!” he cried—“ dastardly villain, out of my sight, lest I again forget myself and anticipate justice! Put him out—and never let him again venture here!”—and he was turning away, when he saw the animal whose wrongs he had so vigorously redressed, and approaching the gentle creature, he patted it kindly.

“ Poor fellow!—fine old Sultan!” as his *protégé* arched its graceful neck, and looked at him with its bright, intelligent eyes, neighing out grateful thanks—“ inoffensive, helpless old fellow.” And Maggy, though trembling violently, and half fainting with the reaction, was struck with the almost womanly tenderness of his manner; while his rich voice had a plaintive music in its cadence, the echo of which long lingered in her memory.

But the mood again changed, and that instantly; for turning to the assembled group, who seemed spell-bound at this outbreak in a master, generally so indulgent, he said in the deep, stern, low tone of voice, which is always felt to be so effective—

“Once for all—listen attentively every one of you:—The man, who ill uses any animal belonging to me, shall bitterly repent of it. Theft is less atrocious, in my estimation, than cruelty—cruelty to the helpless and harmless.”

And yet this was the same man who —— but why feign to be surprised at a notorious fact?—why moralize, on what not one of us is free from? Paradox reigns in every character; and it is truly said that ‘we are consistent only in inconsistency.’

CHAPTER X.

‘——Conscience, good, my lord,
Is but the pulse of reason.’

COLERIDGE.

‘Believe me, Zaura, but the sly young god
Can see to choose his victims with discretion,
And oft times leagues himself with Idleness.

“I WISH Maggy were here to help us,”
remarked Lady Blaymore, one morning, as she
rose from a table covered with plans and
sketches. “I think I am even more ignorant
than you, Gerald, about these things.”

“And I am afraid I cannot contradict you,”

he replied ; "the shortest way will be, for me to take these down to the Parsonage, and let Mr. Cleveland carry out his own idea about the new school-house; what do you say, Edith ?"

"I gladly agree. Make him understand, that the object he has in view, must not be defeated by any thought of expense; for I know we are both ready to supply to any reasonable amount."

Therefore, in pursuance of this agreement, Lord Blaymore was paying a very early visit to the Parsonage, and most kindly entering into Mr. Cleveland's wishes and ideas, when his wife entered the room, with an open letter in her hand, as if to communicate some news, that evidently much pleased her.

"I beg your pardon," she said, after shaking hands with her husband's guest—"but I thought Mr. Cleveland was alone;" and, on Lord Blaymore immediately rising, to leave them, she added—"pray do not let me interrupt your business; I make no

apology to your lordship for my intrusion, as I am sure you will not wonder that I am eager to share my news, of which you are quite welcome to partake"—and she turned to Mr. Cleveland and said—"See—it is a letter from Mrs. Raymond Pemberton, announcing her brother's approaching marriage. You remember Mr. Hammond, my lord," addressing him, as he stood looking out on the lawn; and, without waiting for his reply, she went on, saying eagerly—"Poor fellow!—the dreadful disappointment of that mysterious event nearly killed him."

Still he moved not; and Mr. Cleveland, who had glanced at the letter, then returned it, with the remark—

"It is my firm belief that the anxiety, suspense, and fatigue of that sad affair, shortened the life of Sir Rupert also. He never quite rallied from the shock it gave him. It was a horrible thing;" but, remembering that Lord Blaymore was in Ireland at the time it happened, and, probably, was

only partially informed of the event, he dropped the subject, and, resuming their former conversation, said—

“ Then I have your permission to settle about the building, according to this plan”—pointing to one, the merits of which they had been discussing.

“ Oh, yes—certainly—just as you please,” was the reply, though, for what his lordship knew, he might have been consenting to the erection of a palace; for he spoke with an effort; and, rousing himself from a reverie into which he was falling, abruptly took his leave.

Happily, Mr. Cleveland was so engrossed with the agreeable duty that now devolved exclusively on himself—namely, that of building a school-house he had so long wished to have—that he hardly noticed Lord Blaymore, or he must have remarked the sudden difference of his whole look and manner.

Changed, indeed, he was; and, directly he reached a quiet spot, he no longer sought to

conceal it. The elastic step is gone; the head, usually raised with noble grace, is depressed; the whole attitude is that of one suffering from something keener than sorrow—for it is despair! A shudder shook his whole frame; and, pressing his hands over his eyes, words of bitter regret, of unavailing repentance, break forth, as slowly—slowly—he walks on.

“ You do not look well, Gerald,” said Edith, when, after some hours’ absence, he returned—“ you are not equal to the fatigue of this party; and if you would like to give it up, I am sure, I hope you will not think that I care much about it.”

“ Thank you—if you would go without me”—for he knew that she had made unusual preparations for a grand assembly, at the house of one of the county members.

But she stopped him. “ It is not to be thought of,” she said; and added, in a very gentle tone—“ Oh, my husband!—what pleasure should I find there—when my thoughts would be always here, where you are?”—and,

rising, she opened a flacon of choice perfume, and, approaching him, said—"Now, close your eyes—I see what is the matter—you have been walking in the early morning sun, and have a headache"—and as he obeyed, glad to exclude every object, and hide from her the weakness that called up tears, she bathed his temples, and cooled his feverish hands, till, yielding to the soothing influence, he slept.

Edith looked at him—a world of love was in her eyes—his waving hair was carelessly pushed back off the lofty forehead, and showed the perfect outline of the face, now tranquilly reposing. She gently pressed a kiss on his cheek ; and, when she turned to leave him, she herself seemed to have caught the reflexion of this beauty.

Oh, love !—oh, tenderness !—what beautifiers ye both are !

But from this time, again did he experience a return of that restlessness which lately had appeared to have diminished ; and Edith, ever on the watch to anticipate his wishes—ever

ready to sacrifice her own inclinations to the indulgence of his, proposed a change of residence. Suppose they went to Ireland—she had never seen the Moat—nor had he—since the reparations had commenced—he really should see about them—would he go?

“Yes—to Ireland,” he replied; “but, then, all these engagements which you have made with your friends.”

“Nothing more easy,” said Lady Blaymore, “than to break them. *You* are not well—that is reason enough for me; and, therefore, it must be so for others.”

Very soon after Lord Blaymore had left the Parsonage, Maggy returned from an early visit into the village, and, perceiving two letters, directed to her, lying on the hall table, she quickly glanced at the handwriting on each, and entered the sitting-room, where Mrs. Cleveland was busy writing. She looked up as Maggy, with a smiling face, displayed the yet unopened letters, saying—

“One from Miss Malcolm, and I know, by

every token, that the other is from dear Sophia Pemberton. Which is to have the precedence?"

"Oh! this time, the latter, by all means," replied Mrs. Cleveland, guessing the news it would contain; and scarcely had one side been read, than Maggy, waving it above her head, exclaimed, in a joyful tone—

"Only think! dear aunt, Sophia is going to be married; and, now, you must tell me who is the happy man."

"I already know, my dear, and was half sorry that you were not present when I opened my letter from Mrs. Pemberton. Here it is; read what she says, while I learn Sophia's version of the matter;" and Maggy made the exchange, first, however, glancing rapidly over the other well-filled sides of the paper.

"This is all very pleasant," observed Mrs. Cleveland, when, having laid aside her walking-dress, and read Miss Malcolm's note, Maggy returned to talk quietly over the unexpected information, and prepare her replies.

“I fancy that I now understand the cause of Sophia’s sudden change of manner long ago, and of her subsequent illness.”

“Ah! you think she loved Mr. Hammond, even then?” asked she, in a low tone, as if fearful of being heard by any one but Mrs. Cleveland.

“I do ;—and how admirably she must have behaved, when this idea was never before suggested, by any chance betrayal of her feelings. How resolutely did she devote herself to her duties, when her heart must have been very sad! But hers is a woman’s true delicacy and fortitude, with all a woman’s gentleness and affection—and you may well be very proud of your friend.”

“I am ; I always have been. Sophia’s friendship has been very delightful to me. But, suppose all had not happened as it has: do you think, she could so have conquered her affection, as ever again to have become happy?”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Cleveland, in a very decided tone—“yes; any one with her good sense

and high principles—her true refinement—her knowledge of the duties of life, and her unostentatious discharge of them—will be sure to conquer a love that is hopeless, or that proves to have been misplaced—just as Sophia Pemberton did, they will do. All that may weaken or tempt will be avoided, and all the means sought that will strengthen and give success to wise endeavours to become free. I believe, dear girl, it is only the silly, the romantic, the sentimental, whose lives are blighted by an unrequited affection ; they first encourage it, without the least rational hope ; and then foster it by foolish confidences, and dangerous repinings. I hope I am not going to be severe, but I always consider them more the victims to ill-regulated feelings, than as suffering from anything that can be reasonably called a disappointment. But here is your uncle ; let him have the few fragments of news that we have still left undiscussed."

" What does Mrs. Raymond mean by this ? " he asked, reading a passage from her letter ;

“ ‘I am very sorry that our sweet Maggy will not be present on an occasion which gives us all so much pleasure ; but, when I named her to Sophia, my thoughtlessness was directly rebuked by that delicate care for the feelings of others, in which she never fails. You remember that once before Maggy was invited.’ But what of that ?”—and he looked at his wife.

“ She means,” returned Mrs. Cleveland, “ that when Mr. Hammond was before engaged, Maggy was to have officiated as bridesmaid. Of course, Sophia wished to avoid all that might remind him of that painful period ; but read on, for you scarcely glanced at it, when Lord Blaymore was here—you will perceive, that she speaks confidently of her brother having become quite reconciled to the past—she says—‘ Arthur I am sure loves Sophy, with his whole heart.’ ”

“ Certainly ; or he would be very wrong to marry her. I shall write to him, and offer my congratulations, for he is a most worthy fellow, and deserves a good wife, such as Miss Pem-

berton will make. But what says Miss Malcolm?"

"Nothing," answered Maggy, "beyond the usual kind sayings—except that Mrs. Rochedale Bevington's son has lately caused her fresh anxiety, and that she intends to remain at Boulogne—so I must discipline my impatience; and, when I look at all the treasures I have, I fear I must be very ungrateful to want more."

"A heart, in which dwells gratitude, is sure to have many other congenial inmates," remarked Mr. Cleveland, as she stood on tip-toe to kiss him.

CHAPTER XI.

• — You gods, look down,
And, from your sacred vials, pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head! Tell me, mine own,
Where hast thou been preserved ?'

SHAKSPEARE.

LORD BLAYMORE and his wife had set off for Ireland ; Von Rüdiger had resumed his usual friendly visits at the Parsonage, and appeared to be quite satisfied that Maggy had done wisely, though, at first, it may be almost doubted whether his disappointment was not equal to that of his nephew. But, lately, he had been so cheerful, so like his former self,

that she felt more at her ease in his society than she had done since the oft-remembered refusal.

One morning, after having answered a letter from Sophia Hammond, which contained a description of their pretty honeymoon residence, in the Isle of Wight, Maggy had gradually strolled, from the Parsonage garden, into the churchyard ; and was so deep in thought, that she found herself standing a short distance from the graves of Basil and his father, before she perceived whither her steps had tended.

During his last illness, the former had expressed a wish to be buried in one particular spot, on which he had often remarked that the rising sun shed its beams, and on which they seemed fondly to linger, as it set. The only shadow that fell across this place was that of a very ancient yew tree, which, at mid-day, when all around was oppressively hot, rendered this place cool and pleasant.

As might have been expected, this wish was scrupulously attended to ; but to the minds of

all who knew Sir Rupert Rochedale's observance of family customs, and the importance he attached to every tradition, connected with the name of Rochedale, it did appear extraordinary, that, instead of allowing his dust to mingle with that of his ancestors, and adding his monument to the many that occupied various parts of the church, he desired to be laid by the side of his dear son Basil.

Maggy was looking at the two monuments, so different from the humble mementos, that marked the last resting-place of most who reposed there ; and she slowly approached them, while memory had gone back to her childhood ; and she stopped at that memorable day, which indissolubly linked Basil and Percy with so many of her thoughts. She went rapidly over the time that had intervened, till she found herself a daily visitant by the dying couch of her then unknown cousin ; tears filled her eyes, as she recalled many a scene that then occurred ; and, though her heart beat with pleasure to think that one of these dear

friends still lived, there was deep sadness in the glance, which she cast on the monument erected to the memory of the one departed; and thence her looks wandered to that only very lately finished, which told where his father lay; his father who had been, to her, so generous—so steady a friend; and, with a sigh, she was turning away, when she was startled by the sudden appearance of a stranger, who might have been reading the inscription on the reverse side, for he was very near; or he might have been silently observing her.

The last supposition was not pleasant; nor was a slight feeling of alarm diminished, by the abrupt movement which the stranger made, directly their looks met; for he impetuously advanced with a smile, accompanied by a half-checked cry of delight; but, perceiving this, she hastily withdrew, and turned to leave the place.

The stranger raised his hat, and begging her pardon, if his sudden appearance had alarmed her, said, this was his first visit to the very pretty village.

All fear vanished when she looked at the gentle, benevolent face, of the intruder, and heard the tones of a remarkably sweet voice. She, therefore, courteously bowed, and smiled ; and the gentleman, emboldened by this, proceeded to remark, how much surprised he was that any member of the Rochedale family should be interred on this spot.

Maggy informed him, that the monuments were in memory of son and father, and related the wish that had led to the departure from old custom ; adding, while her voice slightly trembled from emotion—"Sir Rupert Rochedale loved his son so very dearly."

She then opened a gate, near which, by this time, they were standing, and that led to a good-sized paddock, separating the Parsonage orchard from the churchyard, and, again bowing to the stranger, entered and closed it.

How eagerly he gazed after her, and watched—with a look very much like envy—the caresses she bestowed on her favourite pony, which came trotting and neighing

towards her; and had she not been fully occupied with her quadruped friend, perhaps she might have turned her head, and seen something more than usual in the gestures of the stranger; who, the moment she was out of sight, clasped his hands, and uttered aloud words of fervent thankfulness, for the unspeakable blessing that awaited him—for the precious, precious gift that had been preserved for him—and, oh, so preserved! How attractive was her ingenuous frankness!—how captivating the look of mingled innocence and dignity that beamed from her face!—Ah, how it recalled the almost girlish beauty of Alice Rochedale, when he wooed her to be his bride!"

His bride! Yes;—he was Edward Danvers!

"I met a remarkably interesting stranger, this morning," said Maggy, to Mrs. Cleveland; and she actually spoke as calmly, as if the mysterious affinities and presentiments, which every pattern heroine should experience, were nothing but absurd and ignorant fancies.

"But here comes the very stranger himself," as the gate-bell rang ; and Mr. Danvers, after giving a note to the servant, was led across the hall, and, contrary to custom, at once admitted to the private room of Mr. Cleveland.

After the lapse of some time, during which Mrs. Cleveland kept chatting of matters of mere local interest, the servant entered to say, that his master requested her presence in his study ; therefore, Maggy put aside her work, and after having arranged some flowers more to her taste, she opened the piano, and indulged herself in, what Herr Von Rüdiger called, a fit of inspiration—during which, fragments of airs, odds and ends of songs, were thrown together, reversed, and separated, just as whim or taste dictated.

While thus amusing herself, time always passed by unheeded—and she was executing a capriccio, which well deserved the name, when she was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Cleveland — who, silently approaching, stooped down and kissed her forehead.

Kind—nay, affectionate, as he ever was, he was rarely demonstrative ; and this departure from his usual manner, made Maggy look closely at him, as if trying to read the cause.

He understood the meaning of that expressive look, and said—“ You have not forgotten the gentleman whom you met this morning, have you ? ”

“ Oh, no ! ” she replied, with animation ; “ that would not be very easy for any one to do—for me, especially, as I soon again saw him coming here. Is he a friend of yours, dear uncle ? ”

“ Not quite a friend yet—though, in time, he probably will be. But what will you say, when I tell you, that he is a very old friend of yours ? ”

“ Of mine ! —how very delightful ! But, where is he ? —surely he has not gone,”—and she was hastening as if to overtake him, when Mr. Cleveland replied—

“ Stop, my dear, he is here—and I should rather have said, he is a friend of your parents, for —— ” But he paused—for, pale

and trembling, she sat down and, in a changed voice, exclaimed—

“Ah! then, he remembers my sweet mother, and, perhaps, also, my father—whom all appear to have forgotten. Let me see him—oh! let me see him, that I may ask;”—but, at this moment, catching sight of the stranger, who was standing near the door, she rushed out, and, seizing his hand, impetuously drew him into the room.

“You knew my parents,” she said—and very mournful was her tone when she added—“I never did—for they died when I was so young. Only very lately have I become acquainted with my mother, for I have her portrait, and that tells me everything, as I sit and look at its beauty; but I have no trace of my father—not one.”

“Do you very much wish to have some knowledge of him, also?”—and his manner was agitated, and he looked deeply affected.

“Oh! so much—so much. I have wearied for it, beyond all imagination. Sit down and

tell me, then, something of him. What was he like?—where did you know him?—were you his friend?"

"Alas! I was, unwittingly, his worst enemy."

She started back, and took her hand from his arm; but this movement of repulsion was too much for him—his nerves were already too tightly strung, and his voice was impeded by sobs as he added—

"For—for—Oh! child of my Alice!—child long mourned as dead!—child, till lately, believed to be lying by her side, in the quiet grave, but now found—my child—my child!"—and he opened his arms.

With a wild cry of triumph—of delight—she sprang towards him—

"My father—my dear father!" she murmured, as she was pressed to his heart; and, when Mr. Cleveland turned to look at them, as he left the room, it was Mr. Danvers who was weeping, like a woman, while the face of his daughter was radiant with unspeakable joy.

How quietly she nestled her head on his bosom, while he uttered broken words of gratitude and love; how joyfully she raised that beautiful head, to press a kiss on his forehead—his eyes, even on his soft, wavy, white hair—and then, kneeling down before him, she said—

“ ‘Bless me—even me, also, oh, my father !’ ”

And how solemnly did he invoke a blessing on that newly-found treasure; and then, raising her, he looked fixedly on the bright young face, and repeated—

“ Yes, my child—the child of my Alice !”

At this juncture, Mrs. Cleveland entered the room, and the moment Maggy looked at her, she perceived on her countenance evident traces of recent weeping. At once divining the cause, she flew to her, and embracing her, said,—“ Still yours—still, and always yours ; but oh ! to have a father—and such a father ! —how can I be sufficiently grateful for all I receive ?”—and as Mr. Danvers listened to the last few words, his heart beat high with plea-

sure ; for who could recount all the fears and anxieties that he had experienced, while anticipating this meeting ; fears, lest the delight of finding each other, should not be mutual ; anxieties, lest the follies of his youth, should have been so placed before his child, as to render her incapable of realizing, and valuing, his changed habits and views.

Now, he found with unmixed joy, that not only was she ignorant of any error in his previous character ; but her words proved that she gave him full credit for much goodness.

“ Bless her !” he mentally said, “ bless them who have so much better performed my duty, than I should have performed it myself ; and oh ! may my hopes of happiness for the future, be as well-founded as my trust in that sweet girl’s affection and goodness.”

CHAPTER XII.

'No care, no stop ! so senseless of expense,
That he will neither know how to maintain it,
Nor cease his flow of riot.'

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Edward Danvers, many years ago, took that sorrowful leave of his wife, and told her to be of good cheer ; he did so, in the hope, that a careful survey of their still remaining means would show that utter ruin was not inevitable ; but the gay and sanguine temperament, that scorned all serious thought for the future, or believed that that must be as bright as the present ; now found the present itself

gloomy and sad ; and the buoyant spirit of Captain Danvers, shrunk down, aghast, when he found himself actually a prisoner ; and when he no longer saw a face that cheered him—no longer listened to the fallacious promises of gay associates, hope forsook even him. Nor was this all—for, in the course of a few days, his man of business sent him in the dry details of debtor and creditor account ; and showed him the disenchanting fact, of very small property to meet very large claims ; and then he sat looking at the disproportioned sums total, like one stupified.

There was but one very distant and uncertain glimmer that threw the least light on all this gloom ; he believed, that if the debt, which, after all, was not strictly his—or, at least, not incurred by extravagance on his part —could be met, that his other creditors, who had hitherto remained quiet, would continue to do so, or be willing to enter into some compromise, so that he could be set at liberty ; for, while thus prevented from making any exertion to

reduce their claims, it would be impossible to surmount his difficulties.

Rendered desperate by the perplexities of his situation, he reluctantly resolved to take a step, which, at one time, he would have started from, as mean and contemptible in the extreme.

One of his guardians had been an uncle —his father's elder brother — an officer of Artillery ; who, when compelled, by lameness from a severe wound, to retire from service, had removed to Wales, where, with his unmarried sister, he had passed the remainder of his days. It was while spending some of his holidays with these relatives, that Edward was initiated into the mysteries of angling ; here, he also learned how to handle a gun—here, he took his first equestrian lessons ; and, above all, from this gallant old officer, he heard how fields were won—how honour and glory were acquired—and had his thoughts directed towards that profession, which, in his uncle's estimation, made a hero and a gentleman of

every one who belonged to it—more especially if he were an engineer !

Great, therefore, was the Major's mortification and disgust, when he found that Edward's enthusiasm for the most noble profession of arms, exhausted itself on finery and show, and was satisfied with a splendid uniform, a crack regiment, and a mess of good fellows, ready for any exploit that broke the monotony of their trifling duties, and eager to take their full share of fun and frolic, in any shape.

When he first heard of this, the Major almost regretted the many hours he had spent, in rubbing up his mathematics, and rummaging among his books on fortification, in order to be able to give his nephew a few lessons ; for of what use would these treasures of military science be to one so degenerate ?—and gentle Miss Danvers knew that something was amiss, in the contents of the letter just received ; for the sticks, which her brother needed when he moved, were heard stumping about with more than usual noise and celerity.

But when his indignation had evaporated in sundry garrison ejaculations and contemptuous vituperations, the choleric Major tried to look calmly at the matter; and generously called to mind the many occasions on which these military dandies, as he termed them—but only when he was angry—had done good service, and proved themselves worthy of their soldier name. He remembered engagements, when the be-plumed and embroidered lancer had plunged into the thickest of the deadly struggle, as gaily as if the trump of battle had been the ball-room orchestra; and when the glittering helmet and laced jacket of the hussar, had shown where the strife raged the hottest and the fiercest—and he reconciled himself to his disappointment with the thought, that, perhaps, some such glorious opportunity to distinguish himself might be the fortunate lot of Edward. Little did the stout-hearted officer of engineers care for danger, wounds, or death; his motto was, ‘the hardest fight is highest crowned.’ According to him, scars

were the soldier's badges of honour ; his certificates of good conduct ; his claims to the title of hero. And had he described his idea of a true 'brave,' it would probably have assumed the form of some antique Torso—some fragment of humanity, minus legs and arms, whose maimed condition was an appeal for sympathy, which every courageous and noble heart would acknowledge ; for, intelligent as the old Major was, he never could understand that the better part of valour is discretion.

But he died before even the least brilliant of his wishes, regarding his nephew, was accomplished ; for Edward was the hero of only many a flirtation story ; his gallantry was that of the ball-room ; the wounds he received were from Cupid's bow and arrows, and from glances shot from bright eyes ; the dangers, he so valorously encountered, were from the ambuscades of manœuvring *mammams*, and the snares of their designing daughters, who were trying to imprison him and his large fortune in

the flowery fetters of Hymen ; and it is a fact, that Edward showed no small degree of strategy and skill in escaping all these risks ; for, alas ! it is not every one who is so lucky.

The small sum which the gallant old man had been able to save was left to his sister, who had been almost entirely dependent on him ; for, as Edward's father had died intestate, the whole of his property devolved on him ; and now he resolved to put in practice, what the contented disinterestedness of these two only relatives had hitherto prevented.

Under the pretence of purchasing his aunt an annuity, from the proceeds of his uncle's savings, he added so munificently to this scanty sum, that, had not Miss Danvers been more ignorant than even women generally are, of all matters of business, she must have detected the generous imposition ; and, in order to spare her the pain of removing from the pretty cottage, which he knew time and associations had rendered very dear to her, he purchased it, and insisted on her accepting the

deeds as his marriage present, whenever that event should take place.

And now, when every pound was, as it were, doubly valuable, he had to write and ask for her help; but his face was almost burnt with the hot blush of shame, as he did this; and scarcely did he give himself time to state his necessities, and his hope that he was asking only a temporary sacrifice, so anxious was he to conclude a letter which painfully evidenced his degradation and folly.

He also wrote to his other guardian—a merchant friend of his father's—who had limited the discharge of his duties to the management of his ward's fortune—and had done this so advantageously, that the originally large fortune had been considerably increased.

To him, Captain Danvers stated his actual position, and entreated his advice—frankly adding, that help, in any other form, he did not venture to ask—and these letters dispatched, he sadly awaited the replies.

His aunt's answer was prompt and charac-

teristic. He was to tell her what she could do—and how she could do it—and it should be done,—the cottage, the annuity, both were at his service; let him express his wish, and there should be no delay.

His ex-guardian was more deliberate. Before he replied to his prodigal ward's letter, he had an interview with his lawyer, and from him learned the desperate character of the entanglements, and the melancholy position of the Captain and his wife. Happily, he was nothing daunted by this; and, carefully ascertaining the exact truth, and arming himself with copies of papers, to look over at leisure, he, at length, saw Captain Danvers, and went, at once, to the very heart of the difficulties by which he was beset.

Without expressing either anger or sympathy, he proved to him that he had not a shilling that he could call his own, and was, besides, deeply in debt. Ascertained, by a sharp examination—at which Edward winced, without his interrogator showing the least

emotion—what were the prisoner's own views and capabilities; and then, on his own terms, offered assistance.

This was too great and unexpected a boon to have been refused, however hard might have been the conditions; but Mr. Layton was of that country whose merchants are princes—princes alike in fortune and sentiment—and having once more resumed the reins, and again undertaken to manage Edward Danvers' fortune, he did it as a princely merchant should, and as a wise man always will.

He did not remind Edward of his folly, but he made him feel that he must pay the just penalty—he did not reproach him with this disastrous result of extravagance, but he gave him to understand that it must never happen again. Mr. Danvers had not understood the value of what he wasted, and he must now learn it, by himself helping to build up that splendid structure of wealth which he had so wantonly destroyed. He must now work hard, and, perhaps, wait long for success—

leave England and his friends, or, rather his associates, and his wife must go down to Miss Danvers, who had kindly offered to take her and her infant—unless,” said Mr. Layton, who did not know how entirely her family had disowned her—“unless her own relations are prepared to receive her.”

Bitter as this last clause was, debt and imprisonment had so wrought their usual acquiescent influence, that, to be free from them, Edward submitted to this also; and then anxiously enquired, how soon he should be at liberty; for that very day, he had received such news of his wife, as made him painfully desirous of seeing her.

Alice, herself, had always made the best of her state; and had even so disciplined her impatience, as hardly to express her wish that they could meet, lest his imagination should magnify the illness that now prevented her from moving; but Mrs. Wilkins was not so scrupulous; and from her, Captain Danvers had heard what made him wretched and depressed beyond expression.

Little suspecting the desperate state of weakness, to which Mrs. Danvers was reduced ; Mr. Layton assured him that no needless delay should occur ; nor did there—but the very day of this meeting, was the last of Alice's life. And two days after her funeral had taken place, and before the sods that covered her grave were settled down, her husband was told that he was free !

By the desire of Sir Rupert Rochedale, everything for which he made himself responsible, had been conducted with great promptitude ; and ever since, Alice, by illness, had been prevented from writing, there had been but little opportunity of sending Captain Danvers frequent information, except by a laborious visit from Mrs. Wilkins ; so that it was not till the eve of his liberation, that he heard of her death ; and this, by means of a note, which she had delayed to send, though she employed one of the undertaker's men to write it for her ; and, who communicated the intelligence, much as he would have

worded a complimentary invitation to attend a funeral.

Poor Edward Danvers!—he was almost frantic with grief; and so dreadful was his distress, that, when the lawyer's clerk came with the requisite papers and orders for his liberation, he was so much touched by his sorrow, and really fearful of its consequences on one who looked the mere ghost of his former self, that he kindly offered to send for a cab, and accompany him to the house in which his wife had died.

Arrived there, fresh tidings of additional bereavement awaited him: the funeral was over; and, as a woman who was cleaning the rooms informed him, the child was dead, and buried with the mother!

Quite overpowered at the desolation, and wholly unable to think for himself, Mr. Danvers sank, almost fainting, on the stairs. Weeks of anxiety, sleepless nights, and now a long fast from the early part of the previous day, had done their work; but again his

sympathizing companion helped him, and, having recovered him from his faint, invited by the woman, they followed her into one of the mean rooms lately occupied by his well-born, beautiful Alice, and his little unknown child.

The woman of the house was from home, but, from her gossiping deputy, they learned all that seemed necessary, namely—"that a great gentleman, from the North, had come and paid all the debts, and done everything very handsome—very handsome, indeed"—for, to one who had not often seen funerals, in that quarter, performed with much beyond pauper expense, the simple, quiet style with which Alice Danvers had been interred, seemed, indeed, something more than handsome.

"Would you like anything further done here?" asked the clerk; and, probably, had the sad widower not felt still faint and ill, he would have enquired after Mrs. Wilkins.

But he was bewildered with all he had just

heard, and, mournfully shaking his head, re-entered the cab, and they drove to Lincoln's Inn, where he met Mr. Layton, who was shocked beyond measure at the disastrous news, and so greatly alarmed at the appearance of Mr. Danvers, that he scarcely staid to conclude the business for which they had met, but hurried him into his carriage, which, fortunately, was waiting to convey them home to dinner.

As they drove along, he left a message at the house of his own medical man, which speedily brought that gentleman to Mr. Layton's; and, before the next morning, Edward Danvers was raving in all the horror of delirium, vainly striving to break imaginary fetters, and imploring, in heart-piercing accents, to have one look—only one last look—at his Alice and her infant.

But he recovered; and fully regained his strength at his aunt's cottage in Wales; and directly his health permitted, he was most anxious to begin life anew, and to enter on

the performance of those duties, which his energetic friend had marked out for him. He rose from his bed of suffering and sickness a sadder, but a better, and a wiser, man.

To him, the world had hitherto been a vast playground—riches had been his playthings—society, his play fellows.

It was henceforth to be his workshop—his talents were to be his tools, and his companions his fellow-labourers.

Now it was that he found out the valuable legacy which his uncle had bequeathed him—a legacy which could neither be squandered nor wasted, but which use rendered more perfect—now were his lessons remembered and added to—now were his hints understood and put in practice ; and so hard did he now study, under circumstances which were not particularly favourable, that, in the course of a few months, he felt sure, that the career proposed to him, was one in which, if the first step were but successful, the rest would be the same.

CHAPTER XIII.

'Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to Heaven.'

SHAKSPEARE.

AMONG the numerous correspondents of Mr. Layton, was an American merchant, who had speculated very largely in those numerous schemes for which this go-a-head and enterprising nation is so celebrated—schemes which their indomitable resolution and steady perseverance so often render eminently successful.

Some gigantic plans of railways, and miles of tunnelling were just now about to be car-

ried out—capital was ready to almost any amount, and Mr. Layton's friend, being the one whose risk was the greatest, wanted a person of integrity, talent, and education, to watch over his interests—to help by his advice—direct by his skill—and secure the fair results by his honesty.

" You are the man for this," said Mr. Layton—and Mr. Danvers felt a throb of exultation and pleasure, as he heard words that implied commendation and confidence, such as he had never thought to merit. " The duties are exactly such as you are quite capable of performing, and the process one that will be most valuable in its influence on your character; for, if I see clearly your weakness, believe me, I am not blind to your strength. Will you go?"

" I will—and, by the help of Providence, I trust, I shall not dishonour your recommendation."

" When can you be ready?"

" In the course of a few weeks." And so

he was ; and so well performed his part, that he won the confidence and friendship, not only of his employer—whose partner he eventually became—but was the chosen intimate of a French gentleman, who had been sent by his Government on an important state mission.

As the friend of M. St. Léon, he was, from the first, always cordially welcomed by his daughter ; and when, after the lapse of some months, Pauline blushed whenever the agreeable Englishman appeared, and lost her charming gaiety when he left, M. St. Léon—who shared his daughter's pleasure in the society of Mr. Danvers—thinking that his insular modesty needed prompting, with continental freedom, spoke.

Edward Danvers had never forgotten Alice ; but, to his affectionate nature, the endearing ties of wife, children, home, were especially attractive—so Pauline and her handsome fortune became his.

In the society and love of his pretty, gay wife, the clouds of seven years' duration seemed

to separate and disappear; but the death of M. St. Léon, followed by the loss of two children, and the continued illness of Mrs. Danvers, made him resolve on returning to Europe.

At first, his wife seemed to benefit from the change—when again her fading cheek drove them to Italy, and the adjacent isles—but in vain—at Corfu she died, leaving two children. The boy showed so much delicacy, that by medical advice Mr. Danvers continued to travel about. Now it was on the sea—now among the mountains and valleys of Switzerland—till the bloom of health seemed to have become permanent; and he was on his way to France, when he met Percy Rochedale at Malta.

He remained among his wife's relations at Paris, till the news of his aunt's declining health hastened a journey to England, which he had meditated ever since the death of the late Mrs. Danvers. Happily, he arrived in time to see this kind relative—this friend of

his boyhood, as well as of his elder years ; and had the satisfaction of knowing, that his generous affection had procured her every luxury her old age required ; and, in a few weeks, he received her farewell blessing.

One of his chief objects in now hastening to London, was the wish to learn where his first love—his Alice—was buried ; and to visit her grave for the first, and, perhaps the last time.

Well remembering the tragic tale that he was doomed to hear, when once before he had driven to the miserable quarter, to which he now directed the cabman, his mind was irresistibly carried back to the past. Event after event glided on, in rapid succession—extremes of all kinds met in bewildering contrast—smiles and tears—joy and sorrow—while life and death, standing side by side, closed the mental phantasmagoria !

The house was reached—but, alas ! it had exchanged owners, many and many a time since he had been there. Enquiries in the

neighbourhood proved useless; some persons very sharply replied that they knew nothing about it, and seemed half indignant that it should be imagined their interest could extend beyond the unsavory snuff and tobacco they vended, or the rusty bacon from which they cut untempting morsels for customers, who carried them away in their dirty hands; others, with that vexatious habit—not wholly confined to the vulgar and ignorant—assumed a knowing look, minutely enquired particulars; as if comparing them with some vague recollections which were gradually assuming consistency; and when Mr. Danvers, trembling with hope, listened eagerly for the next remark, he found, in one instance, the funeral was that of a bed-ridden old man; in another, that of a poor, hard-working woman, whose husband was tried on suspicion of having previously ill-used her, and hastened her death—an event which had happened only a few weeks ago!

At last, a tradesman, more intelligent than the rest, suggested that, perhaps, the real

landlord of the house could inform the gentleman of what he wanted to know—and to him Mr. Danvers was driven.

In reply to his enquiry, he said—"Really it is so long ago—there have been so many tenants." But, glancing at Mr. Danvers, he was struck by the earnestness of the gentlemanly enquirer, and added—"I will refer to my books."

After going back to the date which Mr. Danvers gave—"Ah, here it is. Mrs. Cookson, front ground floor, I remember; but she is in the work-house. You see, sir, these houses are let, and re-let, and sub-let, so that the landlord, as in my case, provided he receives the weekly rent punctually, knows nothing of other lodgers; and it is difficult——"

"Yes, so I perceive," said Mr. Danvers, sadly, for his hope was now very small; "but, perhaps, you may remember that towards the close of this same year, there was the funeral of a lady—of a lodger—in the first floor."

"Ah! yes, I do, now you mention it; and a very respectable thing it was; did credit to the undertaker. Some rich relation, I think I heard, came forward."

"Can you inform me," said Mr. Danvers, "of any thing by which I could trace this funeral, or tell me the undertaker's name? I know, at the time of her death, this lady had, living with her, a very attached old servant, whose address I cannot find out—perhaps, because she is dead."

"What was this person's name, sir?" enquired the tradesman, his civility strengthening, as he observed Mr. Danvers.

"Mrs. Wilkins."

"Here, Kitty—come here!" and a respectable woman appeared to the summons; "what was the name of that old person who came here to ask about a book that was left at No. 17? I forgot to ask if they ever found it; but I know she left her address."

"I am giving extraordinary trouble," remarked Mr. Danvers, with that courtesy

which he never laid aside ; “ but if I might venture to offer any recompense—— ”

“ Don’t name it, sir,” interrupted the wife, quite won with his gentle manner; and she proceeded to turn up and examine paper after paper, on a rusty, dirty file, till she was so near the end, that Mr. Danvers felt his heart very heavy from anticipated disappointment. Not so the seeker; blowing away cobweb and dust, on she went. At last! Archimedes, regardless of dress, would, of course, have exclaimed—“Eureka!” She smiled and said—“I have found it, sir; here it is”—and very carefully clearing away from them the venerable dirt of more than seventeen years, she handed some curious hieroglyphics to Mr. Danvers.

“Mrs. Wilkins, 22, South Street, Paddington. A thousand thanks,” he said, receiving the yellow, and brown scrap, as reverently as a Mussulman would take a leaf of the Koran; “you do not know how greatly you have obliged me; but you must permit it to be something

of an exchange,"—placing on the table a folded note ; which, though both the shopkeeper and his wife cried out against his leaving, with—"Oh ! sir, I cannot think of it!" and, "Oh ! pray, sir!" both eagerly opened before the cab had started for Paddington.

"Well, he *is* a real gentleman," was the remark of the husband.

"He is very handsome," said the wife, "and yet there was a look in his eyes that made one feel odd and sad ; anyhow, I could not help hoping I should find it ; I could not bear to think of disappointing him,"—and, in this remark, she echoed the feeling Edward Danvers always excited ; it was impossible not to find a pleasure in pleasing him.

"Now is she alive?" was the anxious thought of Mr. Danvers, as he re-crossed London from South to North—"open the door!" he said, in answer to the driver's enquiry—"I will knock. Does Mrs. Wilkins live here?"

"Yes, sir ; but she is too lame to come to

you ; will you please to follow, sir. Grandmother, here is a gentleman," said a young woman, leading the way to a back parlour, which looked both neat and cheerful ; for there was a long strip of garden seen from the window, in which were ranged several blooming plants.

Very much changed, indeed, was the old woman ; still he recognized her. But no sooner had she put on her spectacles, and raised her eyes to the face of her guest, and seen his kind smile, then she uttered a loud cry, partly from terror, partly from joy.

"My master !" she said—"my master ! long thought dead !"—and, happily, she burst into tears.

"Yes," he replied, "kind old friend, still alive ; though, owing to some strange mistake, you believed me dead ! Yes, I am alive, and right glad to have found you—for I have still much to learn, which you only can tell ;" and, perceiving that she had quickly rallied from the effects of her surprise, he lost no time, but

began questioning her of all that had happened after his sorrowful and final separation from his wife.

He listened in profound silence, as she spoke—sometimes garrulously dwelling on trifles—sometimes repeating the tale of privation, sorrow, and suffering, till his very heart seemed rent. She told of the birth of the little girl, and its increasing delicacy, which there were no means of arresting; still, he spoke not—he could not—for no effort could keep back his tears, or stifle his sighs.

“Well, sir,” she continued, having expatiated to her heart’s content, on what, she thought, the haughty, stern behaviour of the grand stranger, and described the death of Alice, with that graphic power, which some of her class possess in an extraordinary degree, when there is quick observation, and but little imagination—“Well, sir, when the sweet angel was released from her troubles, and laid in the peaceful grave, I had time to pay attention to the poor babe; for the sickly,

peaking little thing had been sadly neglected —and a wonder it was, that what with one trial, and what with another, the feeble little creature wore through it. When I first took charge of it, I often thought it would be a mercy, if the puny child had died, and been laid in the same grave with its poor mamma."

"But, good heavens!" he exclaimed, thoroughly startled out of his reverie, "the child *is* dead—died with its mother, and does lie in the same grave."

"Do not you go and believe that," replied Mrs. Wilkins, stoutly; "if she would not die when all that misery stared her in the face, she knew better than to do it, when she was taken to live among those grandees—as I was going to tell you about."

But his excitement now passed all bounds; for, imagination, which, during so many years, had always pictured the pale, lifeless infant in its dead mother's arms, had, even during the narrative of Mrs. Wilkins, presented the same idea; and though, it is true, no allusion had been

made by her to the child's death, he had supposed that it was included in the sad relation of the mother's; but this extraordinary assertion —this unexpected discovery, so filled him with surprise, that he could scarcely arrange his thoughts, so as to realize it as a truth—and, eagerly bending forward, he exclaimed—

“Tell me—tell me, at once!—do you mean to say, that my daughter still lives?—and that I am as much mistaken about her death, as you were about mine?”

“Just so, sir,” she replied, in her turn astonished at his ignorance; “or, least ways, she was alive not long ago, for I have often asked after her; and, when I saw the death of the great Sir, in the paper, I sent to enquire; and Mrs. Collins—who is very kind, and her godmother—came and told me the whole history—and how he had left her a power of money. He was a true friend to her, for all he was so proud and grand—though I once thought differently of him.”

“And I have, then, a daughter,” said Mr.

Danvers musingly—"the daughter of Alice!" And many memories arose, and seemed again carrying him from the present; but there was still much to learn; and, on enquiring how this strange mistake could have been made, she said, it probably arose from the circumstance, that a poor woman, in the same house, had lost her baby, which Mrs. Wilkins believed was buried on the very day on which Alice was. She then proceeded to say, in answer to his various questions, that, when the child was taken from her, she had written to inform him of this removal, and of several other events; but, never having received a reply, or any message from him, had naturally concluded that he was dead—her lameness having quite prevented her from making personal enquiries about anything.

He remained with her more than an hour, never tired of hearing what she was most willing to communicate; and having then obtained the address of Mr. Collins—who seemed to have had the management of all

relating to Miss Margaret, as Mrs. Wilkins called her—and, having written down the direction of his wife's grave, he left her a substantial token of the reality of his appearance ; and promised, not only to see her again, but to bring the long-mourned-for child with him ; neither of them very correctly remembering, that that term was rather inappropriate to a young lady nearly eighteen years of age.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘So che un sogno è la speranza,
So che spesse il ver non dice ;
Ma pietosa ingannatrice,
Consolando almen mi va.’

METASTASIO.

“QUITE fresh, sir, both of us,” remarked the cabman, as Mr. Danvers patted the lean flanks of the horse; “ready to win the Derby, after the feed and rest we have had—where to, sir, now?” for the shilling gratuity for a draught of porter, had made him the slave to Mr. Danvers and his erratic course.

“New Square, Lincoln’s Inn,”—and Mr.

Danvers seated himself, wondering if any more unexpected tidings awaited him from the gentleman, who lived within a few doors of his own solicitor's chambers ; and who, as members of the same profession, and often engaged in opposite sides of the same suit, were well-acquainted.

How often would some important discovery be made, if only one more question had been asked ?—how often does the gold for which we dig so deep, and with so much labour, lie near the surface of the very ground over which we have walked hundreds of times. There is, perhaps, a mystery which we are greatly interested in unravelling ; we make every possible enquiry in one quarter, but in vain ; had we sought in the opposite direction, the solution of the riddle would stare us in the face.

The man, whom, for so many years, Mr. Collins had believed dead, had been all that time in constant communication with his neighbour ; and, when the knowledge of his existence would so materially have changed

the whole current of events to his child, his death was assumed as certain ; while, at that very time, he was often personally consulting his own lawyer, who, for years, had had the management of all his affairs in England.

From Mr. Collins he learned the whole history of Sir Rupert's conduct, which, given by a friendly relator, redounded greatly to the late Baronet's credit ; and, when this was finished, it was with a feeling of intense delight that he heard him say—

“ And now, sir, permit me to congratulate you on being the father of as charming a young lady as ever lived.”

“ And who, I find, is indebted to your excellent lady, for kindness shown when she was too young to understand her obligations. We are both deeply your debtors, and I hope we may have the pleasure of thanking Mrs. Collins in person. Margaret owes her a name which will, henceforth, be very dear to me.”

Of course Mr. Collins was much honoured by this intention ; and, after hearing a few

more explanations, Mr. Danvers took his leave.

"Well may it be said, 'fiction is strange, but truth is stranger still,'" soliloquised he, as he was proceeding to Mr. Layton's, with whom he was staying. "I seem to have been to fairy-land for my volume of news—only, unlike what that country produces, my store will bear the test of examination;" and his heart was full of gratitude for all the events that this day had revealed to him, and overflowed with charity and kind feeling towards the man he had so offended, and who had thus returned evil with so much good. His helpless little Margaret had not merely been fed and clothed, but, from all that he had heard, must have been carefully nurtured, and, finally, well endowed.

Let no one whisper to him the story of early neglect, for it had brought forth good fruit; and what more could he reasonably require?

"You have, indeed, surprised me, Edward,"

said his worthy friend, when he had concluded his relation ; “and now, of course, your thoughts and heart are already in the North. When do you start ?”

“ To-morrow, if possible ; but I have my sad, yet loving pilgrimage to make to her mother’s grave. This sacred duty performed, and then I shall no longer delay seeking our child.”

And the next day, after an early visit to the humble grave of Alice, which he resolved should no longer remain so undistinguished, he travelled northward ; and, having secured rooms in the old town, he rode forth towards the Chase, stopping at the Parsonage, round which he slowly walked his horse, all the time suffering from a tumult of feelings, it would have been impossible for him to have described. At the gate of the churchyard, he dismounted, and, having secured the horse, entered the peaceful spot, on whose solitude nothing seemed to intrude but the little birds, that built their nests in various nooks of the

gothic structure, and sang their songs on the many graves. Mr. Danvers was at once attracted by the splendid monuments erected to the memory of Basil and Sir Rupert, and was, perhaps, glad to enter a place calculated to calm down the joyful emotions which the anticipated meeting with his daughter had produced.

The touching words, ‘the last son,’ arrested his attention, and he was reading the remainder of the inscription, when the paddock gate, swinging and creaking on its hinges, made him look in that direction.

A young lady was advancing. He recognized her immediately. It is she—it is his daughter!—and he was on the point of rushing towards her; but the fear of alarming her restrained his impetuous movement, and he withdrew behind the other monument, and thus gained time for the chilling thought to intrude—“What, if she should have imbibed some prejudice against me? What, if she should have been taught to condemn that

parent, who is so conscious of having deserved it, and whose memory, at this moment, tells him that his folly, his extravagance, have, for all these years, shut him out from that child's love?"

Hence the restraint he imposed on himself, when they really met, though the outstretched hand, the eager glance, could not be repressed ; and, ah ! how difficult did this become, when her sweet voice broke the stillness—when he saw her winning smile, and marked her graceful courtesy !

And when he announced himself to Mr. Cleveland, and poured forth the whole of his eventful story, still did he conclude with uttering bitter reproaches on himself, expressing his fears, lest a knowledge of his conduct might have alienated the affection of this newly-found child.

But Mrs. Cleveland, who was present during the last part of his recital, assured him that such could never be the case. Maggy had been taught to think of both parents with

respect, as well as with love. "And," she said, "I almost tremble for the effect of this extraordinary announcement on one so full of affection, and who has so often pined for a parent's love."

His heart bounded with delight at hearing this positive assurance, that his apprehensions were groundless. But, ah! how impatient he was for the blessed moment, when he should fold her to his heart, and hear her call him, "Father—my dear father!"

"This delay is dreadful," he said to Mrs. Cleveland, when her husband went to prepare Maggy; and, participating in his feelings, she rose, and led the way towards the room where the sounds of music, lately heard, told her Maggy still was—and then the father and daughter met!

"Can we not send for your luggage?" asked Mrs. Cleveland; for very easily was Mr. Danvers persuaded to make a home of the Parsonage.

"Thank you, but I must return to my inn;

for, not in the least expecting to find friends, as well as a daughter, my orders must now be all countermanded—especially, I must settle about my letters. For a few hours only shall I be separated from all my newly-found happiness—and then the difficulty will be, how to get rid of me."

Warmly did Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland congratulate Maggy on this most happy and unexpected re-appearance of her father; for, with her, they were already prepared to add, "and such a father!"—and tearfully did her mother-friend embrace her, and still call her, "her child;" and again did Maggy repeat, "yours—always yours;" and found she had only anticipated Mrs. Cleveland's kind thought for others, by asking for the pony-chaise, in order to fetch Mrs. Wilson—now almost as much at the Parsonage as at home—so that she might have the great pleasure of presenting her to her grateful father.

How very long the drive seemed, though it was scarcely two miles; for Maggy had suc-

ceeded in disciplining her feelings, while at the Parsonage, till the restraint had been almost too much for her. What a luxury it would have been to have wept on her father's bosom! But he was so overcome, and so freely yielded to his own emotion, that she denied herself this indulgence—so that her bright smile should meet his glance, and prove that it was all far, far too joyful for tears.

How she could have dwelt on her blissful lot in having at last found a father; but she felt, she saw that those who had been so long both father and mother to her, already anticipated, already apprehended the changes this discovery must involve; and in the midst of her joy, never, perhaps, had she more strongly experienced the force of that truth—that nothing here is perfect.

With Mrs. Wilson, there were no feelings to be controlled—no joy to be checked; where Maggy went, there would she go also; and it was with a burst of overpowering and unrestrained emotion, that directly she entered the

room, she exclaimed—"Oh, mother dear!—I have found my father; and such a father!" always her mental addition, when she recalled the polished manner, the endearing looks, the subdued loving expression of his still fine face.

"And now," she asked, having with extraordinary volubility, and numerous interruptions, told all—"is it not delightful?—am I not happy? Now, dear mother, you are to go back with me, and see this beloved father; oh! he is so grateful to you, for your goodness to his poor little girl; and he does so long to see and thank you; so run away, put on your dear quiet finery; and let me pack up the little portmanteau,"—and putting her arm round the delighted mother, and kissing her smooth forehead, Maggy led her into her bedroom.

The following morning, Mr. Danvers, who had been reading a letter, brought over with the remainder of his luggage, said—

"The events of the last few days, com-

pletely change all my plans ;”—and then observing the sorrowful glance that Mrs. Cleveland cast at his daughter, he quickly added—“but I hope the change will prove agreeable to us all. I could not sleep last night—and no wonder—for I was too happy—too thankful ; all had been too recent to be contemplated with calmness ; but my half hour’s walk in your lovely garden, has given me time to think of the future ; I have decided on living in England—first borrowing this dear girl, and our kind friend, Mrs. Wilson—if she will favour us, as my companions to Paris ; whence I must fetch Edward and Pauline, now with a distant relation of their late mother’s ; then,” he said, with a beaming smile, which included the whole party—“then we must look out for some suitable residence, within hail of this beautiful place ; and cultivate a neighbourly feeling with all our old friends, here and near ; this, I know is the only way by which I shall keep Margaret within bounds.”

"Oh, delightful!" she exclaimed; "can anything be better arranged?" appealing to them all; "but my dear father has not seen all my relations yet. How pleased he will be with my dear old grandpapa—I know they are congenial spirits."

"What! another claimant!" exclaimed Mr. Danvers, laughing—"I expect the next surprise will be, she herself marching at the head of an army of brothers and sisters—eh, Margaret?"

She smiled, also—and the rich colour deepened on her face, as she remembered that she had called Percy Rochedale brother; but she did not name him—and was very glad that it had not occurred to any one else to do so.

CHAPTER XV.

Lydia.—“There, had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements! so becoming a disguise, so amiable a ladder of ropes—conscious moon! four horses! now to be cried three times, in a country church!—oh, that I should live to hear myself called spinster!”

THE RIVALS.
—

THE journey to Paris had been performed; and, with the addition of Pauline and Edward, the same party were again seated at breakfast, with the hospitable Clevelands; when, after some conversation between Mr. Danvers and his host, respecting the capabilities of a small estate they had been looking over the preced-

ing day, Mr. Danvers said—"Whether to pull down and build anew, or alter and enlarge? is the question. Decidedly, the present house will not do—but, then, I am greatly pleased with the situation. However, I think further discussion will not help us; but a clever architect's opinion must be my guide. And now, about this visit which Margaret wishes to pay to her friend, Mrs. Arthur Hammond—I find that I am included;" and he glanced doubtfully at the two younger children.

Mrs. Cleveland's quick perception read the difficulty—

"You must not imagine that you are to march off with all your treasure," she said, kindly smiling; "Edward and Pauline I retain, as hostages, till you return with your other encumbrance."

"How very considerate you are," he began; but Pauline interrupted him by saying—

"Oh! dear papa—let us stay! Sister Margaret says I may ride her pony for an

hour every day, and Edward is to have his turn; and there is such a pretty garden; and Mrs. Wilson is making Edward a fishing-net."

"Yes, papa!—and she has such a swing at the Lodge! it was Margaret's when she was a wee thing."

"Bribery and corruption!" said the father—his eyes resting with fond delight on the animated faces awaiting his decision. "Henceforth, I am a doomed man. Of course, my darlings, if Mrs. Cleveland will keep you, you may stay—but, Pauline, be very careful when you ride."

"Fear nothing," replied Mrs. Cleveland—Mrs. Wilson or myself will keep them always in sight."

What a delight it was to visit Sophia in her own pretty house; what a delight it was to look on the three faces that met Maggy and her father with such hospitable warmth; and how her heart beat with pleasure when she heard her father say, what charming friends

she had—and her friends congratulate her on having so very amiable a parent.

With his usual benevolence, Mr. Danvers attached himself particularly to Mr. Pemberton, who declared, he quite luxuriated in the society of one who had seen so much, and knew so well how to share his knowledge with others.

"How remarkably well Mr. Pemberton looks," said Maggy, when she was ushered by Sophia into her elegant little bed-room. "Dear Sophia, what a delight this all is—you with your kind husband and father, and I with mine, and a real brother and sister!"

"I sometimes think I am too happy," replied Mrs. Arthur. "When I am alone, and think of it, it seems a dream, till one of the loved faces appears, to prove it a most happy reality. Your remark about papa's looks is more valuable than you, perhaps, anticipate, for on the full recovery of his health must depend the wisdom of attempting his restoration to sight, of which there is every prospect

of success, if his nerves are equal to it. Even yet he knows nothing of this great blessing, which we are hoping to regain for him; but how cheerful he is with your father; Mr. Danvers must be sunshine and music everywhere;" and she again kissed Maggy.

"Ah! he is such a father!" was, as usual, her reply.

And now, once more, we find Mr. Danvers, for a time settled near town, while the house he had purchased, about five miles from the Parsonage, was undergoing the repairs and alterations the architect said were needful; and these seemed perpetually to require his presence and that of Margaret, when the Parsonage was, of course, their head-quarters; and though these journeys were joyfully undertaken, there were still so many things equally importunate in claiming his personal attention, in London, that near there they chiefly resided.

In pursuance of his promise, Mr. Danvers took his daughter to see Mrs. Wilkins;—and

he always laughed when describing this scene, and the old woman's incredulity, regarding the identity of the Miss Danvers, now before her, with the sickly infant, of which, years ago, she had resigned the charge.

"Well, well, time does wonders, certainly," she remarked ; "but, lor', sir, to think of that beautiful creature, as upright and straight as a dart, being the very same puny little being ! Lor', it is next to impossible—it is like a changeling!"

"Perhaps," said the changeling, in her musical voice, and with her sweet smile, "in time, you will believe they are one and the same, when, every three months, I call and leave you a little paper similar in value to this"—and she laid, on the table, the amount of a quarter's annuity, which her father had settled on the woman, who had so faithfully attended Alice in her dying moments.

Mrs. Wilkins looked at it, but she was too much overcome to speak.

"When my daughter or myself are un-

avoidably prevented from bringing it," said Mr. Danvers, "draw for the amount on my banker, whose address you will find in that paper."

And, loaded with her thanks and blessings, they at last left her—but not till she was convinced—by closely examining the face of the stranger lady—that she was indeed the child of her late dear mistress.

"And now, some day before long, my dear Margaret, we must call on Mrs. Collins, whom, of course, you do not know—but she is one of your godmothers, and, in a season of great sorrow and distress, proved herself truly kind."

"Dear papa, how much goodness there is in the world!"

"There is—and we have both come in for our full share of it. It is well that some escape the consequences of their folly—for which I desire to be very grateful."

With that candour which was one of his characteristics—and which gave a youthful

freshness to all Mr. Danvers said and did—he had wished Mr. Cleveland to make his daughter acquainted with the whole of his history—his faults—his weakness—his punishment—his sorrow. But Mr. Cleveland said—“No; Maggy already knows all that is needful; to revert to the past would only produce unnecessary pain; and, though I feel sure that nothing can shake her dutiful love for you, I think it unwise to force upon her comparisons that would, perhaps, disturb her present happiness.”

Therefore, though she had long ago known that her father had been thoughtless and extravagant, and that his first marriage was rather against rule—she looked at him, and no longer wondered that her mother had found it impossible not to love and listen to him.

A few mornings after the visit to Mrs. Wilkins, the carriage took them to call on Mrs. Collins, who received them with the same frank, sturdy kindness that had induced her

to stand up for the helpless little thing on whom she had bestowed her name.

“ Margaret has been anxious to come,” said Mr. Danvers ; “ but, I assure you, this is our first opportunity.”

“ I have been hoping every day would bring you,” she replied, “ ever since Mr. Collins told me that you intended that favour. Ah ! my dear, you are something different from the crying babe I carried on my arms to the Chase,—looking intently at the beautiful face, and graceful form that was seated by her side.

“ My obligations are threefold to your family,” replied Margaret—so her father called her—“ I am glad you think I do not, in appearance, disgrace my sponsors.”

“ No, no—no fear of that,” was the reply ; “ but how glad Julia will be—she is now in town, and enquires every day whether her *little* god-daughter has called. I hope, Mr. Danvers, you are an anti-monopolist?—for then we may expect the pleasure of seeing

Miss Danvers, to spend a day with us, before my daughter returns home."

"I shall readily leave your namesake in your charge, any day you write and fix, as I fear she cannot have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Checkers to-day."

And, after having heard a few particulars of this said lady, who was out, showing her two girls some of the wonders of London, they took their leave.

And, Julia!—the novel-reading, sentimental Julia!—how has it sped with her? Why, she has passed through the usual phases which the romantic as well as the common-place mortal must go through; and is now—speak it softly—but it is the truth—is now fat, fair, and forty!

She had not, however, attained to the matronly dignity of these dreaded alliterations, without having had a little romance of her own, with which to fill her letters—and which, according to her own version of the matter, entitled her to the double honour of ranking as a heroine

and a victim!—though, whether the last title would have been quite apocryphal, had everything succeeded according to her wishes—her sensible father always doubted.

The fact was, the imprudent girl had formed one of those chance acquaintances—which are always highly improper and dangerous, as well as often ruinous. The introduction occurred at a place apparently the least likely to have afforded facilities for such a purpose—namely, at a fashionable church, where a partnership in a hymn-book, was only preparatory to an attempt to form a partnership for life.

Moustachios and primrose kid gloves, with an unsparing display of the best substitute for jewellery, are weapons which Cupid's illegitimate brother generally employs, when laying siege to hearts of a given character; for, as the little girl in the nursery is delighted with her gilt gingerbread husband, so was Julia charmed with the splendid waistcoat, and perfumed handkerchief of her Orpheus; who, in his turn, did not fail to criticise and estimate

the toilette of Eurydice, whose address he ascertained, when affecting to be carelessly turning the leaves of the book.

Both the examinations proved satisfactory ; one was made of costly materials, by a fashionable *modiste* ; the latter was situated in a, then, fashionable quarter—the Regent's Park ; and before the clergyman had reached the ‘fourthly’ of his sermon, Orpheus had laid his plan.

A few days after this, occurred a ‘chance’ encounter, for which he had long been watching and, during which he took the measure of the lady’s intellect and good sense, both of which gave promise of ultimate success, with little trouble.

A volume of poetry was next sent ; then came a note, and a reply ; then, in quick succession, followed meetings ; a declaration of mutual love ; some mysterious difficulties about somebody or something, necessitating secrecy ; an elopement was proposed, and had partly succeeded, when the servant, who had

been the confidante, alarmed at the proposed catastrophe, at once broke her faith and silence, by informing.

Of course, Mrs. Collins was useless—nay, she was worse ; for she fell into hysterics ; but, leaving her in them, her energetic husband set off, accompanied by a police officer, and overtook the fugitives, before they had travelled two hundred miles.

Not only was the fair lady compelled to come back, but the gentleman also ; and oh ! ruin to romance—to sentiment—to hero and heroine worship—in the custody of a horrid man, who wore a blue uniform, on a charge of robbery ! made by Mr. Collins for the purpose.

When the whole affair was strictly investigated, this gay Lothario proved to be a traveller, for the well-known Manchester house of Stripes and Checkers ; and, as a few peccadilloes, played off by him against his employers, were thus detected, some correspondence ensued, between the junior partner

and Mr. Collins, which subsequently led to an interview and various calls.

At length, business brought the cotton lord so frequently to town, that Mr. Collins began to joke him about some magnet, and the soft impeachment was not denied. The pretty face of Julia had made him forget her folly, and he spoke out; and though neither in blank verse, nor even very elegant English, declared his preference, and made an offer of his hand.

This, with the settlement he proposed, Mr. Collins thought much too desirable to refuse; for, spite of the good fortune which Julia would have, he was sensible enough to be aware, that the higher set of their acquaintances looked rather shocked at his daughter's *escapade*; therefore, always provided she consented, Mr. Collins did the same.

But Julia did not so readily consent; she was not quite of her father's opinion; and, at first, flatly refused to listen to the offer.

“A man, nearly twenty years her senior!—

one evidently risen from nothing! a man called Thomas Checkers! who would bury her alive in that odious, vulgar Manchester!" and she took refuge in tears, as she perceived that her father listened to her tirade with unusual calmness.

Finding, by her silence, that she must have come to the end of her invective, he quietly replied—

"If you have made a vow of celibacy, in expiation of your recent folly, you are quite right to refuse Mr. Checkers; his example is not likely to be followed by those who have heard of your rambling exploit, which only proves that the man who may marry you, had need have twenty years' more experience than yourself, in order to guide you right; as to his name, I think it quite as pretty as that of John Hopkins, though, of course, you do not;" and she coloured crimson, for that was the euphonious appellation by which Orpheus was designated in this lower world—while her father laughed, and half said, half sang—

'I declare 'tis a shame,
To refuse a good man on account of his name.'

Julia sobbed with mortification and anger,
and her father then gravely said—

"Julia—listen to good sense. Your objection to Mr. Checkers, because he has raised himself to the highly respectable situation he now occupies, is absurd. This fact is, to me, a proof of intelligence, integrity, and industry, which I cannot sufficiently honour. As to being buried, nothing but your inferiority will lead to your exclusion from as much society as you like. Now, do not think that I am going to play the tyrant; you shall do exactly as you please; but, if you are not irreclaimably foolish, you will become Mrs. Checkers—have your town and country house, your carriage and company, and live like a rational woman"—and he left her to her meditations, and then sent Mrs. Collins to give these a right direction, who, fortunately, succeeded in this rather difficult task.

So the fair Julia was married; and her dress was superb—for a description of which, the reader is referred to the last book of fashions. The breakfast was magnificent, and, which does not, by any means, always follow, it was also plentiful. Her indulgent husband let her spend a handsome allowance as she pleased, and permitted her to call the first girl Antoinette, and the second, Josephine—though, with him, they were always Tony and Joey; but, when a son was born, and she proposed some heathenish name, as he termed it, the matter was settled in a moment, by his energetic declaration that Thomas it should be, and nothing else. It was his name, and had been his father's—and neither of them had ever disgraced it—and, by George, Thomas should be the name of his son, also.

CHAPTER XVI.

‘Puisque les choses prennent ce train-là, je ne voudrais pas le déranger, et je respecterais l'idée. Il faudra bien, qu'ils se parlent souvent tous deux sous se déguisement.’

LE JEU DE L'AMOUR ET DU HAZARD.

TIME which had endowed Mrs. Checkers with the celebrated trio of F's, had happily lessened her claim to a fourth—for, though still not very wise, her folly very evidently diminished as the duties of wife and mother began to be understood. She learned to respect the sturdy integrity of her husband, was proud of their only son, and very fond of her two pretty, well-educated girls, who, during their stay in town,

often spent what is sometimes properly called a long day—with Miss Danvers—but which their good temper and gaiety made only a very pleasant one.

Margaret was now on the full tide of visiting and receiving visits, and thought it the most delightful thing imaginable to watch her father's popularity wherever he went; and it was a proud day to her, when she introduced him to her cousin and Lord Blaymore, to the Malcolms, and to a few other friends, and saw the pleasure with which he was always received. And he—ah! it was indeed something to glory in, that this lovely Margaret was his daughter! How peerless she was in his admiring eyes!—how happy he was in her dutiful love!—and he fervently thanked that Providence which had brought so much joy after sorrow—so much good after such folly!

“ You will be dull, my Margaret,” said her father, one day, as he entered with a handful of letters. “ The gay season is drawing to a close; your cousin has already said farewell

previous to her departure for Vienna ; the friendly Malcolms are on the wing ; and you will be alone, if you still decline Lady Rochedale's invitation."

"Alone ! dearest father !—what, with all my best treasures round me ?—you, my mother, dear Pauline, and Edward ! Oh, I have a host when you are all near me ;" and her look confirmed her earnest words.

"But, my love, I fear I must scatter your host ; and that is the reason why I wish you had consented to accompany Lady Blaymore. Edward looks delicate, and I am recommended to let him try sea-bathing. Now, I thought of proposing to you, that Mrs. Wilson should take the children, and the requisite number of servants, to the Isle of Wight."

"I am sure she will undertake the charge ; but then, papa, I must remain with you."

"Well, well," he said, only too much pleased that he should retain her ; "therefore, if you will settle it with our old friend, I will write about a house."

A very short time before the appearance of Mr. Danvers—an event, which had seemed, ever since it happened, to absorb the attention of those chiefly concerned—Mr. Cleveland had received two letters from Percy, both dated Malta, though an interval of several weeks had elapsed between the writing of the first and last.

In one, he alluded to some information from himself that had never reached England; in the other, to his disappointment at being detained at Malta; but, before he concluded, he added, in a hurried postscript, that the much-desired order had arrived, and the remainder of the regiment would embark before the next day. He wrote in his usual good spirits, but made various references to the future, which proved that he considered its uncertainties—which appeared, perhaps, greater than usual, to one on the point of seeing war in all its terrible reality.

He most affectionately mentioned Maggy, to whom he sent many kind messages, mingled

with gay reproaches at her never having learned to write—such being the only valid excuse he could assign for his never having heard from her—still, he owned, this might not be her fault; every mail brought complaints of letters that had been sent, but never received, while those that did arrive, had generally been detained by some unknown agency.

And now how anxiously had Maggy read the daily papers—how she longed and trembled for news from the Mediterranean, but of this she never spoke; for, singularly enough, the name of Percy Rochedale had not been mentioned by either her father or herself; why she, who had so often thought of him, had yet not spoken, was certainly very odd. But though Mr. Danvers had not forgotten his agreeable young friend, of whom he was very often reminded, when arranging his daughter's property, and though he intended to enquire of him from her, so many other subjects, referring to so many other things, engrossed

his thoughts, that so it was, and Percy had not been alluded to.

Owing no less to her father's constant occupation with matters of business, than to his limited acquaintance, and the dull time of the year, when people may walk the streets without the risk of being crushed in its crowd of pedestrians, or of being run over in its crowd of carriages ; it was now really quite an event, when there was a guest, and Margaret had an opportunity of understanding the value of leisure.

One day, Mr. Danvers had left home, when suddenly remembering an appointment which he had forgotten to name, he sent his groom back, to say that he expected a gentleman would call about four o'clock, in which case, he begged Miss Danvers would see him, and request him to await his return, which would be soon after that hour.

But it happened, that very shortly after this message had been delivered, a ring was heard from the gate, a parley ensued

between the comer and the servant, and then some one was ushered into the library.

“My powers of entertainment will be tried now, if I am to keep this visitor in agreeable talk till four o’clock,” was Maggy’s mental observation, she having assumed that it was the expected guest; “but, perhaps, he may not like to wait so long, and must thank his own unpunctuality for the disappointment.”

“A gentleman, ma’am,” said the servant, entering, and handing her a card, at which she did not even glance; but with a—“very well, I will see him,” dismissed the man.

But what sent the colour in so rich a flood to her very brow?—what made the beautiful eyes sparkle and dance with delight?—what made her heart beat so violently, that it was almost painful?

Surely not a mere card; no, nor yet the mere words on that card; but the name, “Captain Rochedale,” engraven there, right before her, brought back in a moment the

memory of years long passed, and the whole train of events, no matter how trifling, with which he was mixed ; and darting forward with a springing step and joyful look, she was hastening down to greet this early friend, after a separation of three years—years which had sometimes appeared very long to her ; but during the whole of which he had been daily remembered !

But she paused ; the weeks and months in all their length passed before her ; the change in her position, which they had produced, and of which she was almost sure he had not heard ; her altered name ; she thought of them all ; and as she involuntarily glanced at the mirror, for the first time, she became fully conscious of the great difference there was in her appearance, since the well-remembered day when he had so carelessly and readily admitted her want of beauty.

Therefore, schooling her feelings, and arranging her looks, she slowly entered the room in which he stood ; but an unconscious move-

ment almost betrayed her ; it was caused by the start he gave as he noticed her—a start in which there were strong symptoms of recognition ; but, as it seemed, he instantly checked himself, for he bowed ceremoniously, and very politely apologised for this apparent intrusion; after having heard that Mr. Danvers was from home ; by saying, that the servant had requested he would remain, as his master had left word that he expected him ; though, he added, he hardly knew how that could be.

She had now quite rallied—courteously explained the mistake, and finished by saying, that if he could await her father's return, she was sure he would be happy to see him—wondering, all the time, how they should have been acquainted, and she not have known it.

" I have not been many days in England," he said; and, as a reason for readily accepting her invitation to wait, he added :—" But, as I really wish to see Mr. Danvers—whose acquaintance I was so happy as to make at

Malta—I took the first leisure day to ride out and seek him, for I am on the point of visiting some friends in the north."

"The dear Clevelands," said Maggy to herself.

Still, he seemed as if he felt that he ought to go; and, after enquiries respecting her father's health, and his young friends, Pauline and Edward, he probably would have departed, had there not been heard a strange noise at the room door—a well-known scratching and whining, which Margaret feared would, at once, mar her scheme, and betray all.

It was very evident that he did not recognise *her*—but she—oh! she would have remembered *him* anywhere!—spite of the appearance of fatigue, from which he had not recovered—spite of the bronzed complexion—spite of the air of command, which was felt in every tone, in every gesture; for there was still the same noble forehead, with which she had compared all others, to find them inferior—still the intelligent dark-blue eyes, with

their falcon glance—still the finely-formed mouth, so typical of firmness and resolution.

To her, he was still the handsome, kind Percy Rochedale, who had ever been foremost in her thoughts, since the day on which he saved dear old Pet.

Ah ! and there was dear old Pet now going to evince *his* good memory, and show his gratitude ; and, as his mistress opened the door, the faithful animal, uttering a cry of pleasure, jumped on Percy, and fawned round his feet, testifying his delight by the low significant whimper common to those attached creatures.

“ Why, Pet ! old boy !—impossible !—and, yet —” as Pet licked the hand that caressed him—“ Pet here ! Maggy Evelyn’s dog here !”—and he looked up at that beautiful smiling face, as if bewildered.

“ Yes,” she said, as calmly as she could, still determined to keep up the mystery till the last moment, “ Pet is my dog, now, and seems to recognise you.”

"Oh! we are very old friends! I see he still wears his collar, though he has exchanged owners. How extraordinary that she should ever have given him away!"—and he looked almost vexed.

"He has belonged to me ever since Maggy Evelyn changed her name," she demurely replied.

"Ah!—indeed!—then you know her;—and she is married?" He seemed thoughtful, and added gravely, almost formally—"I hope she is happily settled!"

"Very much so," she answered, hardly able to keep from laughing at his altered expression; and then, fearing that her steadiness would give way, she changed the conversation, talked of flowers, offered to show him her pretty garden, and easily wiled away the time till beyond the hour, which, at first, had seemed so far off.

It must, however, be owned that it was only her exertion to sustain the conversation, that made time pass swiftly; for the gallant

Captain was certainly in rather a capricious mood, and gave her very little assistance, except by the most silent attention—at one moment listening, as if he never could hear enough, and wished her still to go on; at the next, furtively glancing at her sweet, animated countenance, and replying, more than once, quite at cross purposes.

At length, Miss Danvers could not help agreeing with him, in thinking the return of her father very doubtful; and, not liking to propose his remaining to dinner, she permitted Captain Rochedale to take his leave, he muttering something of soon again having the pleasure—and lingering about, as if bent on being asked to stay.

He had not been gone half-an-hour, when Mr. Danvers returned—the delay having arisen from his meeting the friend he expected, with whom he had ridden another way; and he was so vexed at having thus missed the Captain, that Margaret, who fully sympathized with him, laughingly sug-

gested that there *was* such a thing as the post, and that a note could be dispatched, which would be sure to reach his address.

"Very true," he said; "give me the writing materials at once—I will propose calling on him early to-morrow, and will bring him back to dinner. There, see if that will do—then seal it, and let John ride off with it. I am too much in earnest to risk delay—perhaps he may be chin deep in engagements, if we do not secure him at once." And his daughter sealed the note very carefully; selecting, on purpose, the seal that Percy had given her, and taking extraordinary pains to make the impression very clear.

CHAPTER XVII.

'Once, in a dream, methought my love I view'd;
But, never waking, could her face behold;
And, doubtless, that resemblance was but shew'd,
That more my tired heart torment it should.
For since that time, more griev'd I have become,
And more in love —— I cannot tell with whom.'

WITHERS.

"But, my dear girl," suddenly remarked Mr. Danvers, as that evening they sat together at tea—"surely, Captain Rochedale is not an entire stranger to you—you must have met him at the Chase?"

"Oh, yes; very often," she replied; "still, papa, though I remember him very well, I am

quite a stranger to him ;” and she smiled, but she blushed also.

“ You talk riddles, Margaret.”

“ They are easily solved, dear papa—I have only grown out of his knowledge—it is a fact, I assure you ;” and the first plunge having been thus pleasantly made, she went on with the matter without further hesitation—“ and I want you to help me to keep up the mystery. At the time Captain Rochedale left England—it is a most shocking truth, but I was almost a fright—I had never before that been even pretty; but a wasting illness, and a shorn head, rendered me positively ugly.”

“ Nonsense, Margaret, you never could have been ugly,” he rejoined, looking at her with fond admiration.

“ Ah ! you are much too polite to admit it ; but I think the interview of this day has sufficiently proved it. Oh, papa ! I thought Pet had spoiled it all ; but, only think, Captain Rochedale believes, that this plain Maggy Evelyn is married ! ” and she related the

meeting with a comic reality that was irresistible ; and her father, who had preserved a happy youthfulness of feeling, joined in her mirth, as she mimicked the formal gravity of her visitor, and finished by entering into the mystification, as regarded the Captain, with right good will.

“ But, the Clevelands,” he said, interrupting himself in a peal of laughter, as Maggy imagined some ludicrous result of their plot—“ they will betray the identity.”

“ I think not,” replied Margaret ; “ for by this post I will write a few lines—ask them not, and explain the reason.” But her few lines extended to more than the lawful four sides, and still she would have scribbled on, had not the servant entered to enquire if there were any letters for the post.

“ A letter from our Maggy,” said Mrs. Cleveland ; and she opened it with a beaming look, and, reading the first page aloud, they both laughed at the joke played at Percy’s expense. “ Serve him right, for being so

blind," remarked she ; but, as she read on, in silence, an anxious look took the place of the merry one ; and she gave the letter to Mr. Cleveland, saying—" Read it all through before you go away."

And, when he returned it, his remark was—

" Percy is not the only one who is blind—where have our eyes been all this time ?"

" I fear not very wide open—and yet——"

" And, yet, it may be all well. Percy has every right and noble impulse. It must be left—Mr. Danvers will be sharper sighted, perhaps, than we have been. Will this account for that inexorable dismissal of the Baron Von Rüdiger ?—which, I confess, very much surprised me ; for, to do him only justice, he was very likely to have won a young heart."

" Yes, if the heart had been free ; but I now feel sure that the recollection of Percy Rochedale, destroyed all chance of Baron Adelbert's success. Still, I am persuaded that Maggy was quite unconscious of this influencing cause ; and, though, I believe that I

read her secret, as plainly as if I were hearing her tell it ; I equally believe that she does not know there is one for her to tell ; well—her letter has arrived very opportunely, to spare me the superfluous task of writing to Percy a full and particular account of the many strange events that have occurred ; and of which he is evidently still ignorant ;—mind that you do not betray us.”

“Oh ! I will take the best way I can to keep faith ; for I will delegate all the writing to you,” answered Mr. Cleveland ; “therefore, reply to the hasty note we received, directly he arrived ; and say as much or as little as you like ; tell him that I am weary of writing letters, fit for the complete letter-writer, and which seem lately never to have reached him. Who knows, but that in conformity with the reigning fashion, I intended that very correspondence to form part of my biography ; and lo ! it is in the dead-letter box !—for why may not my life be printed, published, and sold for waste paper, as well as that of other obscure

celebrities, whose do-nothings are gravely chronicled ; and whose know-nothings are maliciously made public ?”

“ For shame !” said his wife ; but the smile on his clever face was contagious ; and with a merry laugh she opened her desk.

Captain Rochedale walked his horse very slowly to town, after he had left Miss Danvers ; for he was lost in a labyrinth of thoughts that quite bewildered him. First, here was Mr. Danvers, the father of a beautiful daughter, of whom not one word had been said during their frequent and friendly gossips at Malta ; he had spoken of merely visiting England, and, yet, it looked very much as if he had made it the place of his residence ; and then, again, intruded the image of this lovely girl—how she did perplex him ! and, apparently, without there being any reasonable cause.

How natural had seemed his first movement, that of meeting her, as he would have met one long-known !—how strange was the

restraint, of which he felt conscious, during the whole of their interview ! and, yet, anything approaching to familiarity would have been unpardonable in him, a perfect stranger to her.

And then—oh ! then to think of Maggy !—that she should not only have married, but have given away an old favourite, which she had always appeared so especially to love. He wondered whom she had married ; and the idea was by no means agreeable to him ; he was sure he should never like him ; and he remembered, with bitterness, that there had been a time when all whom she had loved, he had found it very easy to love also ; and the more he reflected on what he had seen and heard respecting her, the more did he feel annoyed, angry, personally affronted.

It was as if the outlines of some very beautiful imaginary picture had been violently erased—as if a distant and soft melody, which had often sounded on his ears, had been suddenly mixed with harsh and discord-

ant notes—and a weight lay on his heart that he could not remove.

Then did he again recall the vision of beauty on which he had lately gazed—eyes that reminded him of some dream he must have had, in which just such had looked on him with a loving expression, that it was delightful only to remember; and, strangely enough, the face of Maggy, as he last recollected it, appeared for a moment, and mingled with these pictures of his fancy, and, for that moment, obliterated his vivid impression of the beauty of Miss Danvers.

No wonder that the idea of the pale convalescent was quite separated from that of the blooming girl, whose rich complexion spoke of health no less than of perfect beauty. The contrast between the thin, ungraceful Maggy, whose every movement evinced the languor and weakness of an over-rapid growth—and the rounded form, the elastic tread, the exquisite symmetry he had lately seen, was particularly striking—but still more so,

perhaps, the almost ludicrous effect of the well-remembered, closely-cropped hair, as compared with the redundancy of dark, silky tresses, which were wound round and round the small, well-placed head of her friend ; and yet these two different images chased each other through his thoughts, blending and parting, till he felt positively uncomfortable.

“ How stupid I was not to have enquired more about Maggy ! ” he said, to himself ; “ however, that omission shall be remedied, if I meet Miss Danvers again ; if! —a likely thing, indeed, that I should not call there, for even the mere chance of gazing on her beauty —nothing more.”

Then, rousing himself, and trying to shake off this resemblance to a nightmare, he rode on more briskly, and, having dined, was busy writing letters to the Malcolms, who were in Scotland, and to Lady Rochedale, who was with them, when the note from Mr. Danvers was put into his hand.

Delighted at this prompt notice of his visit,

he hastily wrote a few lines of acceptance, and was returning the note, just received, to its envelope, when the seal attracted his attention.

By all that is fickle ! the very seal he had given that forgetful little monkey ! Yes ; he easily recalled the occasion—it was his parting gift ; and he also recalled some other circumstances, that occurred on that evening ; and never had they before produced so strange an emotion. He examined the impression of the seal carefully. Yes ! it is the very same, for the setting had been designed by himself ; and very unlikely was it that Miss Danvers should possess a duplicate. So, this, also, had been given away—and he smiled, rather a doubtful smile, as he said, ironically—"Quite correct ; before we form new ties, by all means, cut asunder and throw away the old ; with all my heart ; she has handed these over to her beautiful friend—suppose I go with them!"—and his face flushed, and a singular light played in his bright eyes, as he said so.

"Now, papa," said Margaret, as the hour approached for Percy's arrival, "remember our compact; neither by word, look, nor motion to betray our grand secret."

"Oh, I promise," he said; "it will be as good as a comedy to watch its progress."

And very stately, indeed, was the introduction, as he said, "My daughter, Miss Danvers;" and the handsome young officer bowed low to the lovely young lady, who was so richly, but appropriately, attired, as he replied—"I had the pleasure of an interview yesterday," which was said, perhaps, as his excuse for having taken her hand.

His northern friends, it is hoped, were blessed with great patience, and strong trust in the stability of his attachments—for Mr. Cleveland, instead of a guest, received a letter, in which Percy begged to postpone the pleasure of seeing them—it was impossible, just then, to leave London—though he neither assigned any reason for remaining, nor mentioned his intimacy with Mr. Danvers—nor

even sent the least token of remembrance to Maggy !

Mrs. Cleveland laughed outright, as she returned the letter. "Caught," was all she said ; but Mr. Cleveland, laughing, also remarked—

"How could it possibly be otherwise ? "

And day after day passed, and still was Captain Rochedale in, or rather, near London ; for, day after day, there was something that led him to Richmond, and when there, something that kept him ; but then, the evident pleasure that Mr. Danvers took in his society, *might* be the reason—or, it might not.

One effect, Mr. Danvers silently observed, which was singularly coincident with Percy's first arrival. Though Maggy, in her intercourse with her father, had preserved that charming ingenuousness, that frank confidingness, which were so delightful to herself, as well as to all around, it did seem strange that, till now, the name of Percy Rochedale had never been mentioned—and now it was being per-

petually mingled with every new incident she related.

And her father was right—Maggy had felt a reluctance—for which she could not account—to speak of one of whom she thought so much ; but having been at last forced to speak of him, it appeared equally difficult to keep silent ; for, was not Percy associated with every event of her life, that had had the most powerful and enduring influence ?—and many an hour did she beguile her father into listening, till tears filled his eyes, as she described the character of Basil—such as she had understood it, while yet a child—and which was so remarkably like that beautiful idea, that the recollection of him even now called up before her more matured experience—and she would talk of Sir Rupert, and expatiate on his kindness, till Mr. Danvers felt, how unworthy of a man of honour had his own conduct been towards one so excellent.

CHAPTER XVIII.

‘Trust me, though fate may turn each hope to gall,
Thou at thy choice, beloved, shalt ne’er repine.’

BULWER.

‘Were you the doctor, and I knew you not?’

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Percy read the answer from Mr. Cleveland, it was not till he had laid down the letter, that he remarked there was not the least mention of Maggy in it; how odd that was; and then he remembered with a mingled feeling of reproach and disappointment, that, in his last communication to the Parsonage,

he had been the first to set the example of this omission ; and he sighed, as he felt that the idea of Maggy never now presented itself, unaccompanied with some association that pained and displeased him.

He had never asked his question about her and her—her change ; he hated the word husband—it was odious, vulgar ; though sometimes the enquiry had hovered so closely on his lips, that he wondered it had not escaped ; but never since their first meeting, had Miss Danvers named her friend ; and it was difficult for him to do so ; the truth is, Percy was now not only angry, but he was seriously hurt ; not because she was married ; oh, no—nothing of the kind ; that, of course, did not concern him—but had she not given away his very last gift ?

And then he would look at the face of his charming young hostess, and wonder why he should think of Maggy, as he did so ; and again yielding to the pleasurable feelings of the hour, he would enter into conversation

with her, and forgot everything in his admiration of her intelligence, no less than of her surpassing beauty.

And, at last, Captain Percy Rochedale had a dream—and dreamed that he was in love with this peerless creature; and, behold! when he awoke, he found that he had dreamed the truth—why, he had loved her from that day, when he had been tempted to rush forward, and embrace her!

‘The spark which but by slow degrees,
Is nursed into a flame,
Is habit, friendship, what you please ;
But Love is not its name.’

“I fear,” said Mr. Danvers, on one occasion—though not one of very rare occurrence—when Pet very disobediently refused to leave Percy’s side—“I fear my daughter’s favourite is over bold ; and it is no proper excuse for me to say, that he is spoiled, as that reflects on ourselves.”

“He is by no means too firm in his attachment, in my opinion,” replied Percy; “I like it.

Once, I should have said that he had learned this of his former mistress; but I have lately changed my estimate of her character ;” and he glanced at Margaret’s watch appendages, and continued to pat and fondle the dog.

“ And what, then, was your impression of the late Miss Evelyn ?” enquired Mr. Danvers, who had his own little reason for asking. “ From a few circumstances which I have heard, I should think her rather amiable,—and he really prided himself on the indifferent way in which he had said it.

“ I should have expected,” replied Percy, with more than his usual earnestness, “ that what Maggy had once loved, she would go on loving for ever—through sorrow as through joy ; for she always seemed, to me, to possess, in extraordinary perfection, that feeling, or that instinct, that never could love the worthless. You have no idea of that little creature’s affectionate, unselfish nature ;”—and he kindled as he proceeded, for his heart beat with pleasure, at remembering all this, without the

chilling recollection that it was now so changed. "Perhaps, she was slightly inclined to be wayward, and capable of being roused to strong indignation ; but a gentle word—a kind look from those she trusted would make her yield ; while she would be in an agony of grief, when led to see that her passion had made her unjust. Then, she was the most delightful companion possible ; for she was full of intelligence and gaiety—abounding in every kind and gentle impulse. I think, at this moment, I see her, as I often really did, during some of those scenes when we watched and sorrowed together—and when I believed her heart so capable of adding to its treasures, that I never thought to find an old affection cast out to make room for a new,"—and his voice was mournful as he ceased.

There was a long silence, which Percy was too much excited to notice ; nor did he see the burning cheeks of Margaret, down which tears were quietly falling ; nor did he remark that Mr. Danvers passed his hand over his

eyes, while he eagerly listened to these praises of his child, for he was hiding his face, as he remembered he had once seen little Maggy do, in Pet's long curls.

In the fond father's judgment, it would have been impossible for Percy to have spoken more eloquently—each word fell on his ears with a sweet sound, and his heart swelled with gratitude, as he thought how truly all these praises were deserved.

Margaret struggled for composure as she rose to leave the room, and her departure broke the train of thoughts in which her companions were indulging; conversation flowed on in its usual channel, of present events and ordinary subjects; and, shortly after, she saw them walking towards the terrace that overlooked the river, and they soon disappeared behind some thickly-planted shrubbery.

And still she sat at the window, as if looking at them; but it was the image of one, only, that lingered in her mind, and occupied her every thought. For a long, a very long

time, he had done so—but only lately had she been conscious of this almost exclusive appropriation—only lately had she understood the cause.

The instant she left the presence of Percy, on that memorable day, when they met, after an interval of years, the real nature of her feelings towards him was at once understood—she loved him—had loved him for a long time—how long, she knew not; though she did know that, as long as she could remember, she had compared all others with him, only to discover their vast inferiority.

This, she was now well aware, had been the case when the young Baron Von Rüdiger had asked for her love—thus it was when any new acquaintance had been made with her father's gentlemen friends. Percy was the standard by which they were tried—and they ranked high or low in her estimation, according as they approached to, or receded from, her model.

Still, this discovery had not alarmed her—

it was so natural to love Percy—and the knowledge was too recent to be accompanied with all those doubts and fears of a return ; those anticipations of disappointment, which so often attend true love ; and, as if the misery of her infancy—the sickly years of her childhood—were to be her portion of sorrow, in this world, where all have their share, not only had her subsequent course been peaceful and happy, but it seemed, as if, in this important matter, also, she was to escape suffering.

But events seemed now to be taking a turn, wholly unexpected by her, when, with a gay and light heart, she had laughed with her father over Percy's perplexities. He had viewed the supposed defection of Maggy much more seriously than she had intended he should ; and it was evident, that the recollections of this early companion, were gradually becoming associated with feelings, the very reverse of those she most wished to excite.

The mystery now was almost oppressive ;

she half regretted that it had ever been carried on ; though, even now, she smiled at some of Percy's misapprehensions, and at the amusement that would ensue when all was discovered. And this she decided should soon take place—indeed, it must—for Mrs. Wilson was expected home ; and every day there was the danger of detection, when either Lady Rochedale or Mr. Malcolm might write.

During these many visits which Percy made ; at Margaret's particular request, Mr. Danvers had never asked her to sing, though he was always delighted with her splendid voice himself, and pleased to observe its effect on others ; and often as she had played before Percy—who possessed much musical taste and talent, and who owed his first singing lessons to Maggy, when they both almost lived with Basil—he had never ventured to ask if she sang, probably thinking, that if she had the gift, she was not so totally without vanity as to conceal it.

She now entered the drawing-room, to be

ready for tea when the gentlemen returned, and, seating herself at the piano, was playing one of her imaginations, which, as usual, took the tone from her feelings.

Very softly Percy entered by the window from the garden, Mr. Danvers having left him to fetch some books from the library, which he thought would clear up a difficulty of which they had been talking. The sound of music had drawn the Captain towards the house, and, charmed with the improvising talent thus unexpectedly discovered in the bewitching Miss Danvers, he drew near, and, before she was aware of his presence, stood close behind her chair, and hummed one familiar air, which seemed to run, with tantalizing grace, through the whole of her medley.

"I am sure you sing, Miss Danvers," he at last said; and, emboldened by her smile, he began looking over a heap of music that lay scattered around.

On many of these pieces, especially on the

songs, she knew that her name, Maggy Evelyn, was written, and she coloured deeply as she perceived that he had already seen it, while, in his looks, there was something like an expression of contempt, which she felt she could not calmly endure.

One little book, in which he had written the words of several songs, at length caught his attention; he recognized and opened it; Margaret felt too dizzy to stop him.

"There is nothing like making a thorough clearance; you seem to be residuary legatee to everything that belonged to *her*," he exclaimed, with an emphasis on the last word, which made her tremble at the idea of the crisis, which she felt was at hand. "I beg your pardon, Miss Danvers; but if, as I believe to be the case, you are not one who easily discards old friends, you will readily comprehend that I am mortified—nay, more, that I am wounded—to find that every vestige of my early association with your friend, has lost all value in her eyes, and is given away.

Own that it is not flattering to be thus completely forgotten."

"Not so, Captain Rochedale," she returned, for it was impossible to remain silent under this impression, so particularly odious to her, and so foreign to her habits; but it cost her an effort to say it—"Maggy Evelyn does not forget."

"You are generous to defend her, in conduct which, I am sure, you could never imitate; but you do not know what Maggy once was to me"—he stopped, as if too much hurt to say more; but Margaret had covered her face with her hands, and was weeping violently.

"Good heavens—Margaret—Miss Danvers—what have I done?"—and, in his agitation he gently removed and retained one small hand—"how have I offended? when I would die before saying a word that could wound you; tell me my involuntary offence—and oh! dearest Margaret, tell me that I am forgiven;"—and his voice was quite suppliant in its tenderness.

"I am ashamed of myself," she said, withdrawing her hand, and trying to speak with composure; for one word in his hasty speech, though it for a minute shook her self-possession, had decided her no longer to continue the mystery; so, with all her former self in her looks—in her manner, she continued—"Oh, Percy—Percy!—how unjust you are to your old friend Maggy!"

He looked at her, electrified; the thrill of joy at hearing himself thus addressed, roused him; the modulation of her tones was like an echo from the past; the look from her dark eyes was that of which he had dreamed, and longed to find a waking reality; the smile was one he well remembered!

"Margaret!" he said, solemnly,—and he looked fixedly at her agitated face—"there is something here which I do not quite understand; in mercy explain it to me—tell me—tell me, who is she?—where is she?"

Her face was raised; in her turn, she

looked full in his eyes ; a glimmer of the truth shone there.

“ Margaret !” he repeated.

“ Call me Maggy,” she said, softly—“ for she is here,”—and her glance fell before the bright look of intelligence and passionate love which filled his, as he exclaimed—

“ No ! here—for ever here,” pressing her to his heart—“ loved—long loved. I see it all now—loved as a child—loved as an innocent girl—loved—oh, how loved !—as the beautiful woman—as my idolized wife !”—and he kissed again and again the sweet face that lay so confidingly on his bosom. “ Dearest Margaret—ever loved Maggy.”

“ Not now, Percy,” she whispered, looking very pale ; for she was quite overcome—“ but my father—— ”

“ I will fetch him,” he said ; “ but—but is it true ?”—and he stopped, and looked imploringly at her.

“ All true,” she replied, making an effort to set him at rest. “ All true, except Maggy’s bad memory.”

CHAPTER XIX.

'But sweeter shines the sun, than e'er he shone
before—
For now I'm Jamie's wife, and what need I say
more ?
We hae a wee bit bairn—the auld folks by the fire,
And Jamie ; oh ! he lo'es me, up to my heart's
desire.'

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

'Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings.'

MILTON.

"I NEVER meant to have spoken to Maggy till
I had been so happy as to have obtained your

consent," said Percy, after he had explained the state of affairs to Mr. Danvers; "for I felt, that a soldier, especially, should have his suit first sanctioned by the approbation of a parent—and, even now, I hardly know how——"

"Say no more, my dear friend," replied Mr. Danvers; "I do not, for a moment, doubt your honourable feelings. I believe I very soon saw rather farther than either of you; and, had I not felt next to certain that the affection was mutual, I should have interrupted our daily meetings. It would have been my duty as a friend, no less than as a father. I never expected to keep my darling long to myself, and to you I gladly confide her happiness."

Words which he repeated soon after to her, and which sounded very soothing and pleasant, as she listened.

How much there was to talk about!—how much to tell! How astonished was Percy to hear first Margaret, and then her father,

relate the events that had lately happened!—and how happy did Mr. Danvers look, as he sat quietly listening to the two bright creatures, who kept reminding each other of the many ‘trifles light as air,’ which had yet been treasured in the memory of each, as events of too much importance ever to be forgotten—simply because the one loved was associated with them.

“Percy, you are a captive,” said Mr. Danvers, when the Captain rose to depart.

“I know it full well, sir,” he replied, looking at Margaret.

“Ah! I see; but you are doubly a prisoner, both literally and figuratively. I have taken the liberty of sending for your servant and your horses—for I hope you will remain here whenever business permits.”

“Dear papa,” began Margaret, with a beaming look—he laughed—and she blushed, and was silent.

“This is a most unexpected pleasure,” said Percy, “and I accept it very gratefully.

There was but one drawback to the happiness of all three. Percy belonged to his regiment—and, while there was the possibility of his services being wanted, he must hold himself ready to obey orders; and these would take him from England—from Maggy.

“As a mark of particular honour,” he said, “I was made the bearer of the despatches which announced our success; therefore, Margaret—dearest, if I am called for, I must leave you.”

“Must you?” she said, despondingly; but, the next minute, she added, lifting her graceful head with a proud, cheerful movement—“Yes, I see you must—and I will not even wish you to remain, much as I may wish that you might.”

“‘I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more,’ ”

was his gay rejoinder; “but, perhaps, we are only anticipating imaginary troubles. My own impression is, that all need for further proceedings in that quarter is over—at any rate,

I am not going to shut out my sun to-day, because it may rain to-morrow. When you have time look over these letters, which I have received from the Clevelands—just such as I expected, they would write."

"I will exchange with you," she said, giving him two in return; "one is from Lady Rochedale. How delightful it will be to find ourselves again at the Parsonage."

"Yes—and with the addition of your kind, generous father's company. Oh! Margaret! you cannot tell how harassed I was while you were mystifying me; Maggy Evelyn always seemed to be treading in the steps of Margaret Danvers, as if she were her shadow. I knew but too well that I loved you, from the moment I first saw you; and yet —" He paused thoughtfully.

"And yet you loved Maggy! Ah! Percy—I like to hear you say so," she answered; "I like to think that I have been so long in your thoughts, because —" — but she

coloured, and was silent, as she saw his eager, animated look of pleasure.

“ Because —— what, dearest ?”

“ Look here,” she said, opening her desk, and taking out the purse which she had directed to him the very morning of his departure.

His eyes sparkled as he took it and kissed the beautiful hand that offered it.

“ But, Margaret,” he said, “ my love is older still—since the time of our dear Basil’s illness, in some way or another, you have managed to mix yourself up with all my thoughts. I always began or ended with you; I never quite understood it; and, though I felt that I loved Maggy better than anyone else, never, till I believed her married, did I comprehend all—and even then it seemed so odd to love you, as I felt I did, while I was so vexed with her. But now you possess my love for both ! ”

Happily, the news from the late seat of war was satisfactory, and, without separating from

Maggy, or, as his wife, taking her from her friends, Percy was at liberty to marry. He could also sell out—for his own fortune, and the handsome addition of Maggy's, would ensure them an ample income. This last step Mr. Danvers was rather anxious to have taken. Why should his daughter be needlessly harassed with those fears and anxieties, so peculiarly the lot of a soldier's wife ?

To this, therefore, Percy consented ; but, in return, he would not hear of waiting till Broadmeads—the name of Mr. Danvers's purchase—was ready ; so the latter said—"Very well—then you must commence housekeeping under difficulties, if you begin without a roof to cover you."

"There can be no difficulties that Mrs. Wilson cannot overcome," replied Percy.—"Margaret, will you venture ?"—and, as she smiled an affirmative, the preparations for the quiet wedding, which suited their taste, were soon made.

The small train walked from the Parsonage, through the paddock, along which Mr. Danvers had watched his daughter the day he first saw her. A merry peal rang out as they passed along, and the church was thronged ; for, was not the Pastor's adopted daughter going to be married ? and, was not he to perform the ceremony ?

And so Percy and Margaret were married.

The best way of removing difficulties, seemed to Mrs. Wilson, to be by removing herself. She had given up the Lodge ; and when Maggy left with her father, she had accompanied them ; and now, to Broadmeads she went, to hasten, by her active presence, the rather tardy proceedings of workmen and furnishers.

Percy and his bride started for Scotland, and, after a delightful tour, spent some time with the Malcolms ; after which, Lady Rochedale put in her claim for a long visit from them

and Mr. Danvers, to her pretty country house in Surrey.

This property, now wholly her ladyship's, she had so successfully improved, that it was one of the most beautiful spots in the neighbourhood; and, to her, possessed the peculiar attraction of being able to recal the memory of her youthful days, most of which had been spent in the immediate vicinity; and of reviving agreeable associations of former times, which changes and sorrow had since nearly obliterated.

Isabel Malcolm, her long-tried friend, was very often her guest; and it was not long before she perceived that one wearing care, was perpetually mingling with much that was now peaceful, and dimming its brightness.

Lady Rochedale could not forget that she was still a mother; and spite of Edith's long-endured coldness—spite of her wilful disobedience, her mother still loved her—watched over her; and rejoiced when this watchfulness brought as its recompense, the assurance of

Edith's happiness ; but the mother now pined for the daughter's affection, and longed to be reconciled.

Between her and her friend there was still, however, one interdicted subject. Isabel kept her certainty of Lord Blaymore's guilt, more carefully secret than ever ; for even now there was no proof ; and, had there been, Edith's marriage would most effectually have sealed her lips. Lady Rochedale, on her side, with that moral timidity that always shrank from unpleasant truths, and which was peculiarly her characteristic, cautiously avoided all reference to a topic, which, though denied utterance, was never forgotten.

Gerald, it was evident to her, now, at least, merited the boundless confidence his wife placed in him ; and he had lately made indirect overtures towards a more friendly intercourse. Edith appeared happy and perfectly contented with the choice she had made ; why then should not her mother rejoice to find that her forebodings had been groundless ; and

gladly own that her prejudices had been vanquished? Lady Rochedale decided that she should be wrong not to listen to words of peace—wrong to cherish ill-will, and banish harmony.

The result of her reflections she named to Isabel; and the latter so earnestly recommended her to forget and forgive the past, that she gladly complied with counsel so in accordance with her wishes, and even took the initiative, by inviting her daughter and nephew to pass a few days at Oakfield, on their return from the Continent—an invitation that was at once accepted.

The Percy Rochedales were to meet them; for, as Miss Malcolm remarked, the presence of the latter, who were favourites and friends of all the rest, would render it more easy for the long-estranged parties to resume their former freedom of manner, and discard the formality that, since Edith's marriage, had marked all their intercourse.

"Mr. Danvers," she said, to Lady Roche-

dale, "is the very person we want to make us all feel cheerful, kind, and loving; and nothing can be better than this meeting, where the Blaymores, from the Continent, and the Percy Rochedales, from the North, will come laden with travelled freshness, and with novelties, collected from such opposite quarters."

Since Lord and Lady Blaymore had left England, Gerald's restlessness seemed to have increased to almost fever height—scarcely could he remain a week even in the most celebrated cities, in which objects of the most striking interest abounded, and where plans of amusement were constantly being put in practice; and it was with a hope, that among more familiar persons and places, he would discard his wandering, unsatisfactory habits, that Edith heard him express a wish to return home.

Nor did her expectations appear altogether vain—for he entered with avidity into all the gaieties of the early spring; and, being called upon to exercise those hospitalities which their rank and fortune made duties, the names

of Lord and Lady Blaymore swelled every list of aristocratic and fashionable entertainments.

One morning, when Edith was driving with her friend, Lady Townley, the latter asked her to accompany her to the show rooms of a celebrated *modiste*, who had some embroideries in silk, of a novel and extremely beautiful description. They went—saw, and admired the work; and, as it was of that peculiar elegance which Lady Blaymore always affected, she ordered a carriage dress and mantle to match.

“ You will be very particular to have the embroidery the exact shade I have chosen,” she said; “ nothing annoys me more than ill-assorted colours.”

“ Of course, my lady,” replied the milliner; “ but, perhaps, your ladyship would like to see the person who will execute the order. Step here, Mrs. Ford”—and she looked into the adjoining room, speaking to a woman dressed in the deepest mourning—“ and bring a few of those specimens with you.”

Mrs. Ford obeyed—and was so occupied,

as she advanced, in arranging her patterns, that it was not till within a few paces of them, that she raised her head,—and was including both ladies in one of those graceful movements so rarely seen anywhere, when a suppressed, but agonized, cry escaped her; and, vainly trying to catch hold of some support, she would have fallen, had not the good-natured Lady Townley rushed forward, and saved her.

Edith stood motionless—her very heart seemed pulseless. Changed as that death-like face was, there lay what was once her cherished friend—Minnie Durnsford! Time, sorrow, remorse, had each passed over the matchless beauty of her face, and left its traces; but, though in ruins, it was still most lovely.

Edith stood motionless—sternly looking on; but, as the bonnet and cap were removed, to give the fainting form air, and the long, silky tresses swept the carpet, a slight shudder passed over her. But not till Lady Townley had loudly expressed her alarm at the lengthened swoon, and recommended that help should be

sent for, and they had carried her into the inner room, did Lady Blaymore attempt to move; and she then felt as if, in that brief space, her limbs had become rigid; but a strong will overcame this muscular effect, and, descending the stairs, she entered the carriage, quite unconscious of the servant's enquiry, whether he should wait for Lady Townley.

At length her ladyship appeared. She apologized for having detained Edith, but said she could not bear to leave the poor woman till she was better; and, fully engrossed with the subject, she hardly noticed Lady Blaymore's inattention—or, if she did, ascribed it to that pride which would not descend to care for one so much beneath her.

CHAPTER XX.

‘— What an earthquake I feel in me !
And on the sudden my whole fabric totters.
My blood within me turns, and through my veins,
Parting with natural redness, I discern it
Changed to a fatal yellow.’

MASSINGER.

BUT Edith had not rightly heard one sentence that her companion uttered ; if she answered her, it must have been at random, for all she was conscious of, was a feverish impatience to be alone—to be alone!—and then—oh! it was dreadful!—oh! it was pitiable!

Her mother’s assertion, *was*, then, all true! —her own combated, but oft-recurring sus-

picion, was, then, true!—and a feeling of fierce hatred filled her heart—a vindictive desire for revenge, a fiery impatience to take signal vengeance, possessed her; and, for a time, she felt as if to remain passive, would drive her mad. But the very intensity of passion wore itself out; and then came other thoughts and emotions not less painful, but, happily, less violent; and, after an hour spent in the solitude of her own room, she was able to feel a satisfaction in the remembrance, that her husband had not met her while in that fierce mood, and under the excitement which *that* recent event had called forth—a mood which not even he would then have had the power to charm away.

One reflection alone had had the effect of somewhat calming her: it was evident that the ties which, too surely, once bound him to Minnie, existed no longer. The very employment in which she beheld his luckless victim engaged, proved that—for she knew too well his generosity and care for anything that he

loved, not to be certain that, in this case especially, all that the most thoughtful solicitude could imagine, would be freely lavished on his idol, and that the very winds of heaven would not be suffered to visit her face too roughly.

Still this discovery rankled deeply in her mind—and, had Gerald given himself much trouble to note the change in Edith's behaviour, he must have been sensible that there was less devotion to his wishes—less gentleness to himself—

' For to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.'

Sometimes, it is true, an asperity of manner, or an ill-humour, unusually demonstrative, would remind him of the days, when he had thought her less amiable than he had hitherto found her; while a curiosity about his movements and pursuits would occasionally annoy him—but, in general, he paid no attention to these changes.

Rather less than a month after this event,

which had been as an earthquake shock to the whole of Edith's happiness, one morning, during breakfast, a thick letter was given to her. Opening the envelope, a second, but undirected, packet was within, and on the envelope were the words—"Lady Blaymore is earnestly entreated to forward the enclosed to Miss Durnsford, whose address the writer does not know."

Edith's first impulse made her cast the letter from her—her next was to seize and destroy it; but her husband was present, and she felt that she must endeavour to control her passion. So, there lay letter and envelope, she starting from again touching them, as if they had been scorpions—and yet scarcely removing her eyes from them, as though they possessed the power of fascination ascribed to the basilisk.

Very short and sharp were her replies to all Gerald's remarks during that meal—not one did she volunteer in return; and, when he at length left the room, she still remained,

apparently lost in thought—recollection after recollection carrying her back to the buried past—back to her marriage—back to her father's death—back to Minnie's strange disappearance—back to the days of their girlish friendship—and all these memories were fraught with bitterness. Yes—all; and, instead of her feelings having been softened by the last remembrance of their loving and innocent associations, she rose with hatred in her heart, and rage in her looks, and seizing the packet, would undoubtedly have burned it, but that the urn lamp had exhausted the spirit.

‘All other woes our pity claim,
Except an erring sister's shame.’

And then the thought flashed across her—she had no right to destroy it—it was not hers.

The open drawer of a Davenport stood near; and, with a look and gesture of the strongest abhorrence, she contemptuously cast it among several loose papers.

Whether it really was her intention to de-

stroy it, was not clear; but an engagement took her from home that very day; and, after the lapse of a fortnight, on her return, there was such a succession of parties and fêtes, that though Edith never forgot that it was there—for she never passed the place without a shiver, as if some horrible object lay there concealed from all eyes but hers—whenever she thought of again touching and directing it, her fingers seemed to become powerless, as if they would refuse to close upon, and hold it.

“I find you countermaned the order for your embroidered dress,” remarked Lady Townley, when she met her friend at a very fashionable party; “and it was well you did. I called yesterday to enquire why mine had not come home, and heard that the poor work-woman has been ill—very ill—poor thing!—I really think I will go and see her—only I forgot to ask her direction. What a very beautiful face hers was; but, I remember, you did not notice it;”—and the gay lady turned to chat with a new comer.

Not notice it!—had she ever lost sight of it?—was it not burnt into her brain?—was it not branded on her heart?—did it not perpetually haunt her?—Not notice it!

Alas! since that day, Edith had listened to the whisperings of a most pernicious enemy; and there were times, when even in Gerald's presence, she could no longer restrain the evil temper these whisperings roused; and then, finding his home rendered uncomfortable by her sullen manner, and gloomy brow, and reminded of one who ever wore a smile for *him*; and, contrasting her sharp remark, or, still more unpleasant, silence, with the loving words, and musical voice of the one now lost; he would hastily rush out, and join some gay party, where pleasure would, for a time, lull conscience, and leave Edith to her own ungenial society—little knowing, and, if he had, still less caring, that many an hour of the absence her conduct had caused, was passed by her in all the agony of self-reproach—in miserable doubts of his love—or in the fear that her over-mastering ill-temper had weakened it.

"Look, my dear, at this letter and envelope, in which I am requested to forward it to Miss Durnsford," said Mrs. Cleveland, to her husband—"but I do not know her address. Since that distressing affair, she has seemed to shun all her former acquaintance, in spite of their wish to keep up kind feelings. What had I better do?"

"I am going to the Chase," he replied, "and will ask the servants there if they know it. Give it me; for, if they do not, I will forward it to Lady Rochedale—she, of course, knows."

And the enclosure was sent to her ladyship; and, after the delay of several posts, it was directed, by her, to its original destination, which it, at last, reached.

Edith and her husband had been for a few days out of town, on a visit; but they were now to return, in order to attend a large party, which was given by one of their wealthy and titled friends, in honour of her brother's return from India. Gerald and another guest

left soon after breakfast ; Lady Blaymore was to follow later.

Though, with a return of his restlessness—which seemed now to have become a chronic malady—Gerald had been impatient to leave, alleging an important engagement with an Irish tenant, as a reason ; he seemed to have forgotten all about it, when a ride of twelve miles had succeeded in restoring a more healthy tone to body and mind ; and he therefore very readily accepted Captain Hilton's invitation to lunch with him : so that it was past three when he reached his own house.

“ Has Lady Blaymore returned ? ” he asked ; and, being answered in the affirmative, he was on the point of ascending the stairs, when Connell made his appearance, with various packets and letters in his hand—it being one of his especial duties, to take charge of all notes and papers directed to his master, and to arrange them in the private room appropriated to the latter.

"Well, Connell," he remarked, leading the way thither,— "you have collected a large budget in a very short time. I hope there is nothing of 'ride for your life' importance, for I am in no mood for hurry or business."

"I do not know, my lord," replied the man, in that respectful manner which no familiarity on Gerald's part could destroy. "But there was one note left yesterday evening, and the messenger said he had been so strictly charged to deliver it without delay, that I think, if I had not expected your lordship early this morning, I should have forwarded it."

"Well, one comfort there now is, at least, it cannot be from a dun of a creditor—though it may be from one for charity. Did you ask any questions?"

"I did, my lord, take that liberty," replied the well-trained domestic, without moving one needless muscle of his face; "and the lad who brought it said, a lady had sent it."

"That will do," said Gerald, who had at

first taken and tossed it after several other notes he had received from Connell ; but he now sought for it, and, as is so common, examined the outside, by way of guessing that information which the inside alone could give him ; and, while this fruitless enquiry went on, the man left the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

' But the white shroud, and each extended tress,
Long—fair—but spread in utter lifelessness ;
Which, late the sport of every summer wind,
Escaped the baffled wreath that strove to bind ;
These—and the pale, pure cheek became the bier—
But she is nothing — wherefore is he here ?'

BYRON.

"Now, fair one," said Lord Blaymore, addressing the letter—"who are you, who present yourself in so rough a garb?—and what soft words are sent in such scrawling, ungraceful characters?"—and as he spoke, he broke the seal.

"If Lord Blaymore would not refuse the dying request of one whom he has most deeply injured, he will lose no time in repairing to the address hereto added,"— which was that of a street wholly unknown to him, and situated in a very poor part of the great metropolis.

The paper fell from his trembling hands ; he felt that he turned pale ; while drops of apprehension and awe stood on his forehead, though his heart felt icy cold. He reeled, as if intoxicated, in his efforts to reach a chair, in which, for a brief space, he sat like one stupified.

Suddenly there rushed across his mind the remembrance of the urgency that there was for haste. He might be too late ! And if he should — for, as his suspicion assumed more and more the character of certainty, his dread became intolerable ; and, with a wild cry, he snatched up the paper, again glanced at the address, and, without attending to some message the pompous porter

was about to deliver, he rushed out of the house.

An empty cab, whose driver's experience, as he noticed Gerald's manner, told him such a fare would be worth securing, stopped close to the curb-stone, with the cry, "Cab, sir!"—and, scarcely waiting to let the man dismount. Gerald himself opened the door, entered, and gave the direction. Speed was enjoined by look and tone; and, calculating how he would make the gent pay for his spree, cabby cracked his whip, and set off—at railway speed?—no, no—only as fast as his weary old horse could be lashed into going.

"Shall we never arrive?" thought Gerald; "oh! if I did but know the way, I could walk more quickly than this horrible pace;"—and, as they passed one squallid neighbourhood, for another still worse, his impatience broke forth.

"Are you sure you know the way?"

"Oh! lauk—yes, sir; why we know everything; and here we are going it in prime style. Get along, old fellow,"—this was to the

horse, which, not being supported by the rein, that was loosened during his master's burst of eloquence, had stumbled—"stand up, stupid, can't ye ; five minutes more, and there we are, sir ;"—and he again began his stable noises, and to crack his whip.

Five minutes !—they seemed hours, before Jehu stopped his fiery steed with a sudden jerk ; and banging down a step covered with mud, held out his greasy cuff for Gerald to lean on, as he alighted.

But he was out, and at the door in a moment ; and throwing the man thrice his fare, never waited for change ; for the door of a small house was, by that time, opened.

"You have been expected, sir," said a respectable-looking woman—"please to follow me ;"—and she moved softly up the narrow, but clean staircase, and ushered him into a front room, very scantily, though tidily furnished ; and, closing the door, left him.

At first, he felt giddy and bewildered ; a burning desire to arrive at his destination,

an irritating feeling at the slowness of his progress, had prevented anything like consecutive reasoning on its cause or purport; one horrible idea had seized him on first reading the summons, and had gained a painful prominence, even among other sad apprehensions, which were less distinct; and now, that he was left alone, every minute seemed to concentrate into its brief space, the suspense—the agony of years.

He rose, and rapidly paced the room, in order that the sound of his footsteps might break the silence which seemed to make itself felt, like that of the grave; and, as he passed the window, he became suddenly conscious, that the blinds were closely pulled down.

Again he shivered with a dread that every moment became more insupportable, as it grew more defined; he pressed his hands over his eyes—what can it mean; this silence—this solitude?—is it—is it Death! Can it be—is it thus we are to meet?—and he sat down, for the sound of his own steps startled him.

The door was gently opened, and the rustle

of a silk dress was heard. He looked up—and a start, an exclamation of astonishment broke from his lips; for there, in the darkened room, stood Miss Durnsford! — changed — grey-haired, and looking very old; but the same cold, settled expression was on her face, which he well remembered—and the same stern glance was in her eyes, though they looked red from recent weeping.

“Miss Durnsford! Good heavens!—for what terrible purpose am I called hither?” he asked; but his voice shook from emotion, and he supported himself by the table.

“To see the dead, Lord Blaymore, you have *now* come,”—and the sound of her words fell like a knell on his ears,—“since you have had as little regard to the wishes of the dying, as you had mercy on the innocence and helplessness of the living.”

“You wrong me—you wrong me!”—he vehemently exclaimed. “I solemnly assure you that I have not lost one moment in obeying your request: but tell me not—oh, tell

me not that I am too late ! She is ill, I know it—perhaps, very ill ; but she will—she must recover ! All that skill can do, all that wealth can purchase, shall be tried—all that tenderness and love — ”

“ Profane not the word, by uttering it,” interrupted she, with the same apparently calm demeanour as she had at first worn. “ Skill and wealth are powerless—she needs them not ; and the most devoted tenderness, the most holy earthly affection are useless to the dead. Your victim is at rest—she sleeps the last sleep—she is dead !”

“ Dead ! dead !” he repeated in the shrill tone of agony—and the strong man felt faint; for, though his fears had all pointed to this, the solemn truth overcame him—the words pierced him like a dagger. “ No, no !”—and he gasped as he spoke—“not dead ! How could she die, without forgiving me ! No, no !—not dead—not yet !”—he muttered, and a violent spasm convulsed his face, as, with a ghastly smile of assumed incredulity, he looked up.

"Follow me, and see the truth for yourself,"—and she opened a door of communication between the room they were in and another.

Almost groping his way—for his eyes were dim with scalding tears, and he trembled so violently, that he could scarcely stand—he rose and followed her.

The window here was open a few inches from the top, and the joyous trill of some caged bird was distinctly heard. The curtains, contrary to general custom, were undrawn—only a muslin blind, half way up, was left; and the light of a glorious afternoon streamed in on almost every object in that small room.

But the blithesome song awoke no echo in the bosoms of those who stood in that chamber—the light cheered not their hearts. Within those walls reigned that solemn stillness which makes all sound beyond, fall as a discord on the startled ear. There was that awful gloom, which overpowers and extinguishes all that

speaks of day and life—for night had come, and overshadowed the last dweller there—death had entered, and the spirit had left its frail tenement—movement—volition—the power to suffer and rejoice—all—all were gone!

Gently—very gently—did Miss Durnsford tread; tenderly—oh! very tenderly—did she remove the covering from that sweet face—and tears filled her eyes as she gazed on it.

With a wild cry of despair, Gerald rushed forward, and fell on his knees.

Yes—there lay his victim—no reproach on those lips—no anger in that face—and, oh! agony, agony!—no look of love would ever again dwell there—no words of welcome ever again be heard.

He dashed the tears from his eyes, for they impeded his sight—and looked steadfastly at her as she lay there, so quiet, so beautiful—the perfect outline of feature still remained, though there were traces of sorrow and pain about the mouth. The long eyelashes rested on the pale cheek, that had lost

its roundness ; her soft, wavy hair, was carefully arranged, and the small, delicate hands, were folded on the heart, that could no more sorrow.

And he still looked on—as if suddenly struck speechless and motionless—as she on whom he gazed, till a ray of the setting-sun struggled in, and, falling on the face of the dead, tinged it with its warm beam, and played like liquid gold among those shining curls.

Miss Durnsford neither moved nor spoke—but she was evidently much affected, when, as if roused from a trance by this unexpected effect, Gerald, bending forward, cried out—

“ Minnie, my beloved, speak to me—speak to me, my only love—speak, and say you forgive me !—Oh, speak !”—and in his desperation and grief, he touched one of her hands.

The icy chill smote on his heart with terrible conviction ; and, burying his face in the coverlet, he sobbed aloud.

Reverently replacing the cambric kerchief, Miss Durnsford approached him. “ Rise, my

lord!" she said—"rise!—this intemperate passion is unseemly; repentance for your offence—not regret for the sufferer—is your duty now."

He rose, and submissively followed her, and she then again spoke—

"I sent for you solely because it was her wish. Had I consulted my own feelings only, this scene would never have occurred. She lived deserted and forgotten—and so she would have died, as regards you. Had I decided, she would have been buried, also, without your being informed of it. But it is very difficult to refuse the prayer of the dying."

"Then, she wished to see me—then, she sent for me;" and something like a faint return of satisfaction fluttered at his heart.— "Oh! that I had but known this! and, oh! misery, misery! that I could but recal the past!—still, you—and, alas! she—wronged me, in believing that I had forsaken, or forgotten her—I swear, by all that is sacred,

that she, and she alone was loved—that I have never changed. My gentle Minnie! who could cease to love thee? Again and again, I reiterate, that I have never ceased to cherish her memory—never ceased to seek for her—why—oh! why did she so mysteriously hide herself?"

"Say, rather, why did you give her double cause? After your cruel, treacherous conduct, why did you not, at least, protect her, who was so sadly dependent on your care? Why did you leave her for another?"—and, as if the presence of that touching spectacle, which lay in the next room, alone had the power to restrain and soften her, Miss Durnsford spoke and looked the stern unsparing truths which she felt.

"I did it chiefly on her account. I foolishly persuaded myself that, with more ample means, I could procure her more indulgences—more luxuries. How I erred!"

"In this, I am thankful that you have misjudged her—to suppose her sunk to such

meanness!"—and again her look was proud and cold, rather than angry.

"And her child—our child."

"No one's child," she hastily replied. "In refusing her mother your name, you deprived the infant of all right to either parents or name. She is, and must be, an orphan, without kindred or station."

"But I have a right—"

"Speak not the word!" she vehemently exclaimed, as if she felt it a relief to give way to feelings so long repressed. "Speak not of rights, you who have set at nought all rights. Did you not remorselessly, deliberately, plan the ruin of yon poor, credulous girl? Did you not win her love, and then torture her by your neglect, contempt, and assumed indifference, till even her gentle nature was roused? —and when she made a feeble attempt to escape from you, did you not, without pity, step in between her and rescue, and drag her to destruction? Oh, it was very, very cruel, and bitterly has she paid the penalty."

“Not she alone; loving her passionately, madly, as I ever have—ever did—as I still do—can you believe that it was no punishment to me, when all my researches after her and our child were unavailing? Do you think it was no suffering, when I pictured her driven to want—perhaps to desperation—by my fancied neglect? Oh, think not that I, the chief offender, have escaped!—this fear has haunted me like an avenging spirit; and, at those times, dreadfully have her wrongs been punished.” And he sat gloomily silent, as if forgetting all external objects.

CHAPTER XXII.

‘——Vengeance, arm’d with fury,
Possess me wholly now.’

MASSINGER.

‘——do not play with
The lightning of my rage ; break stubborn silence
And answer my demands ; will it not be ?
I’ll talk no longer—thus I mark thee.’

I.BID.

MISS DURNSFORD remained quietly watching every change of his expressive countenance, when, at length, he started up, and, approaching her, said—“ Tell me all you can—tell me something of my lost angel ; agonizing as it

must be, let me know it"—and resolutely, as she fancied, that she had steeled herself against feeling the least pity for the destroyer of her lost dead Minnie ; sternly as she had determined not to spare him one pang, or save him one bitter reflection, she now remembered that the one, whom he had so grievously wronged, had pardoned him ; and that, if her spirit could return again to earth, she would speak words not of forgiveness only, but of peace.

She, therefore, began, and related much that is already known, leaving him to picture the despair, the anguish that followed, when Minnie believed herself forsaken ; she lightly touched on the terrible shock of so unexpectedly seeing Lady Blaymore ; and by his start and flushed face, felt assured that this was the first intimation he had received of it ; but, when she told of the letter, to herself, which had been withheld, she could not withhold all expression of her indignation, at what she termed the unwomanly cruelty of disregarding

an appeal so forcibly urged. Mrs. Cleveland's promptness, she placed in strong contrast ; but explained that, owing to unavoidable circumstances, the enclosure had not reached her till within the last fortnight—"I hastened to her at once, but I saw that I was too late."

"Too late!" groaned Lord Blaymore,—and he pressed his hands to his aching head.

She continued—"A neglected cold, caught in the pursuit of her daily employment, scanty means, and great sorrow had, before my arrival, laid her on a sick bed ; I sent away the child, and removed her mother from her small single room, to these comparatively luxurious ones." He looked round, and shuddered. "Yesterday, the shadow of death was not to be mistaken ; but she was calm and resigned ; at her request I sent for you ; but again it was too late,"—she ceased, and quietly dried her eyes, which flowed over.

He sat as if in a dream ; at last, he moved—she was struck with the changed expression of his face—"Did she—could she—?" he asked

in a hollow voice ; but he could not proceed—he seemed suffocating.

“ Yes—she forgave you,” she almost gently answered, touched by his excessive emotion ; and, herself not proof against that interest he never failed to inspire,—and again he hid his face in his hands, and again he wept aloud.

“ And now,” he said, resolutely rising—“ one more look—one more—the last !”—and before she could stop him, he had opened the door, and gently closed it on himself and the dead !

How slowly passed the time, as Miss Durnsford sat there waiting and listening for his return ; though scarcely ten minutes elapsed, before the door that led to the stairs, was softly opened and shut, and his steps were heard descending to the street.

The full light—the fresh air—acted on his over-excited nerves, as it does upon those who have been drinking deep and long. He walked on, without knowing whither ; he could not think ; he felt that something

dreadful had happened—that he was suffering from a sense of choking, and that his head swam. Still he went on.

By degrees, this horrible, waking incubus, left him, and once more he realized the scene in that small, mean lodging : he saw it all, as if even now there, and gazing on it. Still he went on, increasing his pace, till he felt quite faint and exhausted ; and then, trying to recal his thoughts to what was actually around him, he found that he had wandered towards one of the northern suburbs, with which he was totally unacquainted.

Happily, a public vehicle passed. “ Lun-nun, sir ?” asked the coachman ; and Gerald entered, and they stopped somewhere in the City.

Again he set out : but now, to excessive fatigue, was added giddiness, from long fasting. He entered the first coffee-house that he passed, and called for a cup of coffee and a biscuit—and, really thankful for the refreshment and rest, he did not hurry away.

Suddenly he again seemed listening to the tale so lately told ; and though, at the time, his mind had often wandered from the room in which Miss Durnsford and he sat, to that which contained so terrible an evidence of his cruelty and crime, every word then spoken, now sounded with startling reality on his excited senses.

Edith, then, knew of this transaction : but of how much was she informed ?—and then, in a minute, it occurred to him that Miss Durnsford had mentioned a letter, which she had never received, though it had been sent to Lady Blaymore, with an earnest entreaty that she would forward it. Edith, then, had detained it ; and, with this recollection fresh in his mind, he fancied he also heard the melancholy cadence of Miss Durnsford's voice, repeating—" Too late ! "

But would that have been the case had this first appeal from his poor Minnie been sent ? He rose impetuously—a wild gleam of rage darting from his eyes, and paying liberally for

what he had taken, and which had entirely removed all feelings of bodily weariness, he hastened towards his splendid home.

After her husband's departure, that morning, Edith, having arranged with her hostess for several future gay and festive meetings, had followed in the carriage.

As that was to be a very magnificent evening entertainment, to which Lord and Lady Blaymore were invited, Edith, wishing to be in company order, felt sufficiently tired by the revels of the previous day, to find rest very agreeable; and, when Gerald had first returned, was luxuriously turning over the leaves of a new novel, in her boudoir, expecting his appearance every minute—but he came not, and, on enquiring, she heard that he had again gone out.

“His lordship has not returned, my lady; what is your pleasure about dinner?” asked the servant, when seven o’clock was on the point of striking.

“Send Connell to me, if he is at home,”

was her reply—for experience had told her, that he could very often speak of his lord's whereabouts, when no one else could.

“Did his lordship say whether he should return to dinner?” she said, when he came.

How easily lies come!—the most stupid have wit enough to invent *them*, much more, then, a man of Connell's shrewdness, sharpened, as that always was, by a strong spirit of Irish retainership, where his master was concerned. It was now time for dinner, and that master had not returned; so this convenient appendage reasoned, that a fib was needful; it was, therefore, soon ready.

“My lord was called out on important business—a letter, I think, he said, from Mr. Collins—and desired that your ladyship would not wait.”

“Very well;” and, instead of descending to her sumptuous dining-room, to eat in solitary state, she rang for her maid, and had a tray—very simply supplied—brought up to her own room.

The carriage had been ordered at ten, and, by half-past nine, Edith was dressed for the party, and seated in a small drawing-room—her favourite place of resort, when she had only a few friends, or, as was now the case, when alone.

Nothing could be in better taste than her dress—and either she was really looking remarkably well, or her choice was singularly becoming; for, at the first glance, a stranger would have pronounced her rather handsome than otherwise; while her want of grace and symmetrical proportion was not so evident as she sat; or the dignity of her attitude and demeanour might seem, to many, fully to compensate for their absence.

Hark!—a thundering knock—hasty steps cross the hall, and ascend the stairs. Ah! it is Gerald, and he is late; and, as the door was impetuously burst open, she said—with-out raising her head, for she was adjusting a bracelet of great value on her arm—

“ You must hurry, or you will be too late.”

The luckless words added fuel to the fiery rage that burnt within; but his passion had been too eager—his haste had made him breathless.

She now looked up, with a smile on her face; but rose, in terror, when she met the fierce gaze of those eyes.

“Too late!” he repeated, at last, in hoarse accents—“yes, it is too late, for all but my revenge. Woman! tell me, where is the letter which, many weeks ago, you ought to have forwarded, but did not?”

She knew it now! all then was gone, for which she had so long struggled!—but, though her heart fluttered, and she felt sick, she would brave it out.

“Ought!” she repeated, in a cold, measured tone, and with a scornful smile, that lashed him to fury—“you expect your wife to interfere with such degradation!”

Taking no notice of her taunting remark, he repeated once more—“Where is it—fetch it instantly, or, by Heaven! you shall repent of it!”

"Are you beside yourself?" she asked, roused beyond the power of concealment—"you venture to threaten *me*!—I will not give it up;"—for, she now suspected, that, by some means, he and Minnie had met; and jealousy, added to her scorn, made her obstinate and reckless—"how dare you ask your wife to bring you the letters of your cast off mistress?"

"It is false!" he thundered out—"by me, she would ever have been cherished as the most precious of all earthly things; my beautiful—my gentle—my adored Minnie! Oh! why—why did you leave me?"—and his passion assumed another form, infinitely more calculated to exasperate her, than his utmost anger.

"This to me—to me—your wife!"—and indignation burnt on her cheeks, and blazed from her eyes.

"Wife—wife!"—and there was something derisive in his tone that seemed to freeze her; still she would not yield.

"Yes, sir, your wife—not your mistress;

but," she added, with sarcastic bitterness—"with all this refined love for another, how came you to marry me?"

" You ask, do you—*you* ask ; I will tell you," he said, approaching her—" I married you, in order to surround her with luxuries which your wealth would procure—are you answered?"—as he saw her shrink and recoil—" what ! were you weak enough to think that love for *you* was the reason ?"—and, his look and tone were of the most withering scorn—the most stinging contempt, as he added, " you did ?"

He held her arm, and pointed to a large glass that filled the wide pier, and reflected their full length figures—" Look—is that the face—is that the form to please me ?"—she gazed as if fascinated ; and shivered, while to herself, she acknowledged the folly—the madness of such a supposition.

Where was the stately woman, who, a few minutes ago, sat there, looking *almost* handsome ? How was it that dress, then so be-

coming, was now disfiguring ? Anger—jealousy—had blanched and distorted the face that was then decked with smiles ; fear had caused the figure to look mean, and had robbed it of all dignity ; and she then glanced at her husband.

' A fairer spirit lost not heaven.'

There he stood—his handsome face rendered, perhaps, more remarkably so, from the stern, resolute expression, that made his eyes glitter, and gave every feature a stamp of command. There he stood, his majestic figure drawn to its full height, contrasting most conspicuously with her bending, cowering attitude.

Both gazed—and both remembered, to the very last moment of their lives, the figures they then saw.

Undesignedly, he grasped her arm so tight, that the jewelled ornament was bent, and the mark of the pressure remained for weeks—but she felt it not now—the spasm at her heart

was so very dreadful ; but there was more—still more—to suffer—for, bending down, he hissed, rather than whispered in her ear—“ You bought me !”—and rudely flung away her arm.

Oh, for deafness !

“ Mercy !—mercy !” she faintly gasped, putting both hands to her head, as if to shut out sounds so dreadful, so insulting, so degrading ; and she staggered towards the sofa.

“ Mercy !” he repeated, the full tide of fury returning, and drowning every other feeling — “ Mercy ! — why ? — because you showed it to my murdered love—yes, murdered by you and by me ! She is dead—I tell you she is dead—murdered ! Now, give me the letter !”—but she was unable to rise : her looks and gestures, however, indicated a Davenport that stood in the music-room, beyond that in which they were.

He rushed towards it, upsetting an ivory table, on which was a superb *tête-à-tête* breakfast service, and, by a vigorous blow with a

strong ruler, broke it open, scattering the contents in wild disorder on the carpet. He at last found the packet, and, tearing it open, pressed the writing to his lips, murmuring words of fondness, that would have driven Edith frantic, had she heard them: but she was spared that misery, for she had fainted.

Darting at her a look of mingled hatred and contempt, and carefully placing the packet in his bosom, after saying a few words to Connell, he left the house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

‘There’s nothing in this world can make me joy ;
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale,
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man.
A bitter shame hath spoilt the sweet world’s taste,
That it yields nought but shame and bitterness.’

SHAKSPEARE.

“THE carriage is ready, miladi,” said Rosalie, entering gently, with her lady’s cloak, having tapped twice, and received no answer ; but, as she drew near, she perceived that Lady Blaymore was lying senseless on the sofa, and, uttering a piercing scream, she flew to the bell, which she rang violently.

“Send for help ! without delay,” she said ;

but, before the doctor arrived, Edith's swoon had yielded to the remedies of Rosalie.

She opened her eyes—and, glancing wildly and fearfully round, with a shudder that shook her from head to foot, again sank down—though, this time, quite sensible.

She was immediately ordered to bed ; but, before the morning, she had passed through a fearful crisis, which destroyed her long cherished hope of claiming the coveted title of mother, and which left her in a state of most alarming weakness.

Rosalie's kindness and good sense were now of the greatest service ; and, on applying to Connell for information, respecting their master, he said, very significantly—" You had better send for Lady Rochedale."

" But, my lord?"—and she looked surprised.

" Will, I am sure, approve of your doing so."

Therefore, a message was sent to Oakfield, whither she had happily returned from Scotland, and, by midnight, she was seated by the bedside of her daughter.

Weeks—long weary weeks—passed, before there was much amendment; and weeks—long weary weeks—passed, before there was anything like a restoration to former strength.

“To the Chase,” was Edith’s first expressed wish; and when, after still waiting for power to undertake the journey, she found that her mother intended to accompany her—she so strongly insisted on declining this, that Lady Rochedale, though grieved and sad, offered no remonstrance.

“I may want you, my mother; then, I will send,—and you will come?” And, obliged to be satisfied with the painful ambiguity of these words, she promised—and they separated.

Edith resolutely kept silence as to the cause of this fearful estrangement from her husband, and Lady Rochedale wanted the courage to tell her that she knew the whole of this domestic tragedy—knew it, perhaps, better than the wife who went her solitary way, to mourn over all that was lost, and bent on refusing every token of sympathy.

Oh, mother ! why did you not give way to your tenderness, and cast out the cowardly reserve that kept you silent ! Oh, daughter ! why did you not again become a little child, and weep on the bosom that nourished you—and thus find that it was still able to comfort !

Of course, during all this terrible time—with Edith hovering between life and death, sometimes between reason and madness—Lady Rochedale had had all her troubles increased, by the mystery in which the cause of this dreadful catastrophe was enveloped.

Lord Blaymore never approached the house—and, to all her notes of enquiry or entreaty, returned no reply, but ‘that she must act for them all.’ Connell, who was almost wild at these consequences of his master’s conduct, still kept faithful to him and his secret; and, when questioned by Lady Rochedale, he merely replied, that he feared something had happened, that rendered all hope of reconciliation vain.

At length, this harassing uncertainty be-

came intolerable to Lady Rochedale ; this solitary watching began to have an effect on her nerves ; and, as Isabel Malcolm was abroad, with her brother's family, she resolved to write to Miss Durnsford. She was sure that the knowledge of her unhappy situation, and Edith's dangerous state, would, without delay, bring this old friend to her side ; for, though since Minnie's departure, they had never met, the kindest feelings were still cherished on either side.

She, therefore, wrote, and told her how much she needed companionship and sympathy ; and the first pleasant emotion she had felt, since summoned to her daughter's sick room, was at the sight of Miss Durnsford's reply.

But fearfully was she agitated as she read it—terrible was the secret that letter revealed,—and, while she learned the tale of sin, and sorrow—of punishment, repentance, and death, she shed floods of tears ; and then she looked at Edith, lying there so feeble—so death-like

— and thought of the threefold desolation which Gerald's unbridled passion had caused.

Miss Durnsford's relation of the whole event, made, perhaps, a deeper impression on the reader, because it was so totally free from all invective—all passionate lamentings—all useless upbraiding. It was evident that she felt acutely the sad truths she told, and that nothing but a sense of duty could have induced her to bear the pain the effort cost her.

But, though she spoke not of herself, Lady Rochedale knew how sorrowful she must be ; and though she told not of the tears she had shed, Lady Rochedale knew how they must have streamed forth.

“ Never,” she wrote, in conclusion, “ would you have heard this sad story from me, had not Lord Blaymore’s unrestrained fury burst forth on his unhappy wife ; for such, from your letter, I find was the case ; for, though it was evident to me that she suspected the truth, nothing would ever have been said, by

me, to confirm her suspicion. But I cannot help reverting to her unjustifiable conduct, in retaining a letter which was not hers. I firmly believe that, if I had received it, as I ought to have done, a life would have been saved. Think of three weeks of neglected illness—count the days, the hours, of feverish suspense—of thick-thronging doubt—of aching longing for the sight of some kind face—of weary watching for words of peace and pardon! All this she, who is gone, suffered; and it will easily account for the rapid approach of Death. For years have I waited for the summons, that came, at last, too late; and, for this, a fearful responsibility has Lady Blaymore incurred. But I dare not utter one word of reproach. *She* is now at rest, who was so long a stranger to it—and who felt she had forfeited it so justly. Mercy is infinite—I know she sought for pardon, humbly, and with many tears—surely, we may venture to hope that she found it.—Since our first most distressing interview, I have once seen Lord

Blaymore. We met at *her* grave—our tears fell on *her* coffin. He has, since then, earnestly requested to see the child. This I have resolutely refused. While I live, and with my consent, they shall never meet ; but, relying on the kindness, that I have so often proved, I ask one more favour to add to the many I have received from you. When I am no more, should this parentless little creature need a protector, will you—my friend of many years —become one ? She is a girl, needing especial care, under any circumstances ; but, situated as she is, needing care, sympathy, and love, in a tenfold degree."

Was this request granted ? Aye—promptly —eagerly—largely.

But this letter only added to poor Lady Rochedale's difficulties, and decided her on making Connell understand that, at last, she had penetrated the mystery. Through him she knew his master would be told of it ; for, after this, there could be no further communication with her nephew.

This, however, seemed only to have precipitated matters; for one day he reported that Lord Blaymore and himself were going abroad.

“Abroad!” repeated Lady Rochedale, with strong indignation—“what! while the result of this illness is so uncertain?”

Connell looked sorry, but said that he believed such was the determination. And it was.

And, till the gay world found a new wonder to surprise it, and to occupy attention, the breaking up of the Blaymore establishment engrossed all the interest they had to bestow, beyond what they needed for themselves.

About a year after her seclusion at the Chase, yielding to Lady Rochedale’s repeated requests, Edith said she might come—but she fixed the length of the visit; and when the stated six weeks expired, she made no effort to detain her mother; and, seeing that she could effect no change in her daughter’s habits—could impart no comfort—could not even venture to hope that her presence had roused

one better or softer feeling—Lady Rochedale scarcely wished her visit to be prolonged.

Rarely did Edith leave the more immediate bounds of the Chase; and those who on such occasions saw her, hardly recognized her—so great was the change; and when Margaret—who had been admitted only once—wrote to say, that she and Percy were very anxious to see her, before they left for the baths of Germany, which had been recommended for Edward Danvers, the reply limited the farewell visit to her cousin alone.

How shocked was the kind, affectionate Maggy, when they met! how she longed to speak peace to that proud heart, that was wearing itself away in this slow agony; but there was nothing in the stern composure of Edith that gave her courage, or that led her to expect that good would ensue.

“God bless you, Edith,” she said, tenderly embracing her, when they parted. “Oh, refuse not the healing influence of His grace.”

“Farewell, Maggy,” she replied—and twice she kissed the fair face, down which tears were falling; and Maggy thought she saw drops swelling in the hollow eyes of her cousin.

How anxiously now does Lady Blaymore expect the arrival of the post! how her hand trembles as she undoes the fastening of the letter-bag; and her pale face becomes almost sallow as she seems to seek for something in vain; and a sigh, so deep that it is more like a groan, bursts from her lips. And so, day after day, is this morning scene enacted; and her steps falter, and her look becomes sadder, and she presses her hand more closely to her aching head, as this wearing expectation and search continue.

Again is the same weary watching gone through, that had helped, years ago, to shorten the life of Alice Danvers. Again is a brief moment of hope, succeeded by hours of despair. There, want and poverty were added to these anxious feelings, and increased their

suffering ; here, on all around, were tokens of boundless wealth ; but the inner life of both was the same ; both sorrowed, both wept, and both did so in vain.

At last—it is found—a double letter—a foreign post-mark ! She seizes it with kindling looks, then lays it down, till her throbbing heart shall beat less violently. She examines the direction as it lies before her—that priceless treasure ; it is not in the expected handwriting, but what of that ? No longer able to bear this agony of suspense, she desperately breaks the seal ; an enclosure falls ; while, at a glance, she sees that the envelope is a blank ; she stoops to take up the letter, which lies with the direction uppermost.

“ To Lord Blaymore,

“ Poste Restante,

“ Frankfort-sur-Maine.”

It is in her own handwriting ! her letter is returned !

A heavy fall is heard by one of the servants, who was crossing the hall ; and, opening the

door of the breakfast-room, there lies his mistress, motionless ; as he thinks, lifeless !

They raised her, and instantly summoned aid. Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland were there before an hour had elapsed ; and, leaving his wife with Edith, before another hour had struck, he was posting to town, to summon Lady Rochedale.

Once more is the terrible scene repeated which she witnessed, scarcely three years ago. Edith's ravings were dreadful, of her father, of Minnie, of writing that blinded her—of Gerald—but why tell it ?—for before all was over, in her horror—in her deep woe—more than once had Lady Rochedale cried out—“ Oh, Death ! Death, wherefore art thou so slow in claiming thy destined prey ?”

Edith never recovered her senses !—the blow that, at last, destroyed life, had, at once, shattered reason !

After months of such fierce conflict with her feelings, as is, happily, rarely known, she had bowed her proud spirit—she had subdued

her unforgiving sternness—she had acknowledged her own need of pardon, and entirely forgetting her husband's offence, she reproached only herself.

Humbly, very humbly had she owned her error ; humbly, very humbly, had she asked to be forgiven ; and, oh ! how humbly, yet how earnestly, how passionately, had she prayed for that one word—only that one—pardon ! that she might lay it on her heart and die in peace.

“Gerald !” was her concluding sentence, “my husband, whom I have loved with an idolatry, that I now know is forbidden ; I am dying—refuse not to listen to my last prayer.”

Lady Rochedale found and read this, by the side of that bed on which the writer lay a corpse !

Alas ! Edith—truly may it be said that thou hadst ‘loved not wisely, but too well !’

CHAPTER XXIV.

‘———You may repair all yet : the attribute
That speaks his Godhead most, is merciful.

—————You weep,
Oh ! 'tis a heavenly shower ! celestial balm
To cure your wounded conscience ! let it fall,
Fall thick upon it.’

MASSINGER.

THE tidings of this event, reached the Rochedales at Nice. Percy, at once, decided that Margaret must remain quietly there with him and Edward ; while her father and Pauline, now a charming companion for him, proceeded to England, there to make a few arrangements preparatory to their all assembling at

the Chase, directly Mrs. Rochedale, now the mistress thereof, was able to follow.

At Nice, her little Rupert was born ; and slowly travelling, as Percy said, with bag and baggage, he began his march, northwards.

At Paris, they unexpectedly met with Lord Blaymore ; and though there were many reports connected with the late tragedy, in which his name was sadly implicated, Percy did not feel that, in the absence of more correct information, these justified the prudery of avoiding his friendly advances.

These, before the Rochedales left Paris, resolved themselves into almost daily visits—and Margaret, who had always felt a strange attraction towards him, owned to Percy, that it often made her ready to shed tears when she thought of him, with his extraordinary endowments, leading the useless, aimless life he did ; and when, in imagination, she followed him to his lonely home ; for though, of course, she knew of his estrangement from her cousin, and that the latter had died without

having been reconciled to him, she little imagined the frightful devastation the indulgence of unholy passions had caused, and knew not that two whom she loved, had been the sad victims : and, if she had, still Maggy's charity would have whispered mercy. And Percy himself, when he saw him sit by the hour, playing with his eldest boy, Basil, or, the next day, come loaded with dolls and dolls' finery for little Alice, comprehended something of her womanly sympathy.

“Gerald,” he said, the day before they were to separate ; and Lord Blaymore, after lamenting their departure, had fallen into a contemplative mood—“Gerald, my friend, it is not yet too late”—and he shook him warmly by the hand.

“Heaven bless you, Percy, for calling me friend,” he replied, with deep emotion ; “you will hardly do so after having heard my story—but if you do—yes, *if* you do”—and his fine countenance glowed with animation and hope—“then it may not, perhaps, be too late.”

And before Percy was quite aware of his intention, he had plunged into the whole history of his career ; and, with a vehemence and eloquence quite his own, had laid bare his heart to his astonished listener—had told him of his offences and his remorse, of his misery and despair ; but, as he concluded, the fervour of his manner died away—his expressive face assumed a mournful cast—his looks were sorrowful and despondent—and he seemed waiting for Percy's first words with intense anxiety.

There was no resisting the pathos of that mute appeal—the words were soon spoken—and, though the tone was grave, they were spoken with sincerity.

“Gerald, my friend, it is *not* too late.”

He wrung Percy's extended hand with strong emotion, and burst into a convulsion of tears, that shook the table on which he had laid his head. Percy hastened from the room, himself quite overcome ; and, when he heard the door open, he sent little Basil to meet his kind friend.

And it was not too late. At the mature age of forty, Lord Blaymore first began to understand the duties, the labours, and the rewards of life—the value and use of time—the solemn meaning of responsibility—and the inevitable penalty which all who disregarded it must pay; and he bowed his head, and acknowledged the justice of this law.

Many, many years after this gracious change—the progress of which Percy had watched with the most friendly solicitude—Lady Rochedale, who had, till then, with extraordinary inflexibility, resisted all attempts towards a reconciliation, influenced at last by Maggy's earnest pleading, yielded—and she and Gerald once more met.

Pass over the agony of that meeting—for, oh! it was very severe. Intrude not on them while they are both weeping over the dead—wait till they come forth, hand-in-hand—then listen to the exchange of words of peace and kindness—and see the injured and the injurer

transformed into the pardoner and the pardoned.

How clear and fresh, and beautiful, the morning is—and how the dew-drops glitter on the flowers that so profusely adorn the garden of that pretty cottage—and how delightful is the perfume with which, like insense, they fill the air !

A lovely child bounds into the garden, and begins talking and singing to her doll. The sound seems to have caught the ear of some one in an upper room, for the casement is opened, and a lady, past the middle-age, looks out.

She does not, at first, see the child, who is hid beneath the fragrant, low sweeping branches of an old lime. The high, intellectual forehead is wrinkled — the grey eyes look sad and thoughtful ; while, on the well-formed mouth, a cold, stern expression seems habitual. But no—the child's voice is again heard—she emerges from her leafy shelter,

and a change, as if by magic, has passed over the whole countenance of her aged friend.

The effect was as sudden and pleasing, as when the dark clouds vanish, and the sun comes forth.

“Dina, my dear! is not the grass wet?” she asked; and the tone was gentle and full of love.

“Only a little—a very little—and see how carefully I and dolly pick our way;”—and the fairy figure, with a few bounds, reached the gravel-walk—and the lady met her by the flowery porch.

Taking the beautiful blooming face between her hands, she stooped down, and fondly kissed it, again and again; while Miss Dolly was rather roughly put aside, so that two rounded, dimpled arms could be cast about the aunty’s neck, in a lingering and fond caress.

The lady was Miss Durnsford—the child was her grand-niece.

Ah! who may tell all that the former had

suffered?—who may tell how sorrow and self-reproach had mingled, and rendered each more bitter? or, who may say how, as she became conscious of the faults of her own character, she laboured to eradicate them—and she had succeeded!

Had not her cold reserve—had not her stern manner—frozen young confidence, and induced deceit?—had not her over estimate of learning, excluded wisdom?—her exaggerated value of head knowledge, neglected that of the heart? And when she once more charged herself with the care of an immortal spirit, she resolved that it should be reared with a well-regulated love—with an affection, disciplined by experience and wisdom.

So little Geraldine, or Dina, as she was called, repaid a hundred fold all the care and tenderness she received, by being the influencing cause of this most blessed change; and, while the aunt made her skilful in all those useful occupations, and qualified her for those duties, that render woman a ministering

angel, she herself grew strong in love towards all that is beautiful, gentle, and innocent, and found how true it is that—

' He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

One more sketch, and the portfolio will be closed—the pencil will be laid aside—for ever?—who can reply?

It is a glorious afternoon in autumn; when the golden tints are yet scarce, and only here and there mix with the rich verdure of the season, and when the slanting rays of the setting sun alone bring their effect fully out.

The scene is the Chase—the spot which was, once, the side lodge—now much enlarged, without having lost anyone of its picturesque beauties; but, instead of a carriage entrance to the road, there is only the small gate lead-

ing to the garden, which now, as ever, was a blaze of flowers.

‘ It was an evening only for the good.’

In front of the rustic porch, there was a group of figures, of which Mrs. Wilson formed the centre—easily distinguished by her widow’s cap, and dressed with that scrupulous attention to neatness and propriety which she never neglected; though the materials were now rich—especially her black silk gown—a Paris purchase—and which admirably contrasted, with the cloud of white muslin, that fell from her lap, and swept down on the gravel.

She was seated, holding in her arms a baby, on whose face her eyes were fixed with intense interest and affection; by her side stood a fine boy of about four years old; at her feet was a little girl, smoothing the soft coat of a very old dog, which occasionally wagged his tail, to show his satisfaction, or licked the pretty hand, to show his love.

Two women—one looking like an upper

servant—the other, from her dress, evidently a foreigner—stood near the boy.

“I hope the dog will not bite Miss Alice,” said the first.

“No fear of that,” answered Mrs. Wilson, with a smile; “Pet loves the whole race far too well. But, here they come!”—as a park carriage, containing two ladies, appeared from a side path; and she rose to meet them.

“I said we should find them all assembled here!” exclaimed the younger lady, turning to her companion, while her beautiful eyes seemed to dance with happiness. “Have you not admired that atom enough yet?”—and then, with a mother’s inconsistency, she took the infant, and, fondly gazing on its innocent face, covered it with kisses.

“And me too, mamma,” said the little girl, putting up her rosy mouth; “and Basil, too;” and the kisses were given, when the boy—shouting out “Papa! Grandpapa!”—dashed up the wide avenue, along which another party was coming.

It consisted of Percy Rochedale and Mr. Cleveland, accompanied by Mr. Danvers, Pauline, and Edward. Basil was in his grandfather's arms in a minute ;—and Edward jumped into the carriage, exclaiming—

“Now for a drive!—may I, sister?”

“It will be in solitary grandeur,” replied Mrs. Rochedale, “as I and Mrs. Cleveland prefer walking.”

“Oh, no! Here, Nurse, I will drive you and baby—or, Alice, you come.”

But Mrs. Nurse, pretending deafness, moved off in double quick time with her precious charge—Aennchen following her example with Alice.

Percy laughed, as he looked at the rejected Jehu. “I will take pity on your neck, this time,” he said; “and on my own, too,” as he took the reins. “Mrs. Cleveland, let us boast of a fair freight. Margaret is so used to scrambling up and down mountains, that she condescends to talk of nothing less than leagues; but you are not such a puss in boots.”

The others still lingered about the lodge garden ; and though the conservatory was loaded with all that is rich and rare of Flora's gifts, Pauline begged for one autumn rose, and then another, till she had collected quite a large nosegay.

" You covetous creature ! " said her father—
" Margaret, we must go ; or she will strip the garden."

" Good-bye, mother dear," said his daughter, kissing Mrs. Wilson, " you must come and lunch with us to-morrow ; we want your help about this fête, which the tenantry are to have ; and Herr Von Rüdiger is coming to stay a few days with us ; he leaves England next week, to be present at his nephew's wedding."

Mrs. Wilson smiled, as she said—" So, the young Baron thinks he has found a substitute ; I wish him happiness, for he is very amiable."

" We saw the lady when we were at Darmstadt," said Mr. Danvers ; " and a pretty fair little Saxon she is."

And Mrs. Wilson thought, "how taste changes! a little fair-haired girl, after having loved that beautiful creature!" and she looked with admiring wonder at the face and figure of her nursling.

Margaret having called off Pauline, from committing further depredation, took her father's arm, and walked after the carriage.

Mrs. Wilson stood at the garden-gate, and looked at them till they were lost in a winding path; still she remained; and Pet, who, now they were out of sight, had no motive to do the same, jumped up, as if asking what kept her there.

"I was thinking," she said, speaking to him, as though he could understand her—"I was thinking, Pet, of the day when that blessed darling was first brought to me; and when I held her in my arms, as I have just held her child. Ah! short-sighted that I was! little did I know that the pale, sickly babe was an angel in disguise! a blessing be with her now and ever; and with those she loves;

let no harm come near them, and keep wickedness far off."

She slowly entered the house, which had been so thoughtfully arranged for her comfort ; and, closely followed by Pet, seated herself at the window of her pretty parlour, and watched the setting sun and the lengthening shadows.

And longer and longer fell the shadows of the old trees in the avenue ; and deeper and deeper grew the shade, till all was dark ; but from the noble old building gleamed lights from many a window, telling that, once more, it is occupied ; and, by their number, showing that the lord and lady there are not living by, or for, themselves.

Again there is a change ;—gradually the lights from the mansion are extinguished ; a hazy veil, which the heat of the day had flung over every thing, disappears ; the stars come forth ; here and there lie fleecy clouds, which turn to mountains of silver when the moon rises, and, once more, long shadows are cast.

'A purer, lovelier light than that of day'

rests on the scene ; the whole front of the grey pile is bathed in a flood of radiance ; a gentle breeze springs up, stirring the tall trees, rustling among the foliage, and bringing on its wings the peculiar, soothing sound of gently falling water ; melancholy, yet pleasing, is the sound, and perfectly in harmony with the solemn, peaceful grandeur of the place.

Farewell—Farewell !

THE END.

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